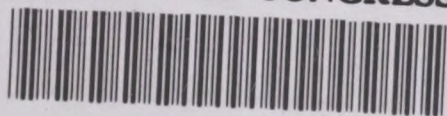


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"THE SCOURGE OF DAMASCUS," "THE CONSPIRATOR OF

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THE SPECTRE'S SECRET

CHAPTER I.

A SHADOW UPON INGLESIDE.

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There was a shadow upon Ingleside. The master lay dead in the grand old mansion, and people mourned at relatives by blood, there were few, very few, to note the picture of the good old man, but his goodness had cheered him to many, and he had been a Christian to the multitude.

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THE SPECTRE'S SECRET.

CHAPTER I.

A SHADOW UPON INGLESIDE.



THE principal incidents of the following story are yet within the memory of many living, and some are living who acted parts therein. One of the chief incidents of the sea came under the writer's own observation, as did the most important of the closing scenes. Hence, the reader may not find our Ingleside, nor our Oxington upon the map as we locate them, though, be sure, they had an existence, if not in latitude and in name, yet all the same.

There was a shadow upon Ingleside. The master lay dead in the grand old mansion, and people mourned. Of relatives by blood, there were few, very few, to note the departure of the good old man, but his goodness had endeared him to many, and he had been a Christian neighbor to the multitude.

Walter Hargrave died on Wednesday, the ninth of December, 1840, and as a few circumstances of the time anterior are necessary to an understanding of our story, we will briefly give them.

The family at Ingleside had consisted of Walter Hargrave, aged sixty ; of an adopted son, named Horace Moore, aged twenty-one ; of a housekeeper, named Edith Somerby, aged thirty ; and of a few faithful house-servants and farm-hands. Hargrave had never married. In his youth he had plighted his faith and given his love to Clara Edgarton. Later he went to sea with an uncle, promising Clara that they would be married when he returned. Two years passed, and word came that the ship had been lost, and then Clara, in answer to the entreaties of her parents, gave her hand, without her heart, to a man of means, named Moore.

Three years after her marriage Walter Hargrave came home to tell the story of shipwreck and disaster upon a far-away desert island. When he knew all he could not in his heart blame Clara ; and yet, from that time they were not happy.

Years, long years, passed away, and Hargrave, grown wealthy and retired from business, was on his way home from England. On board the same steamer was a widow and her son. With the son, Hargrave formed an accidental acquaintance and liked him. He was a youth of not more than eighteen, singularly beautiful and manly, with a clear, healthful skin, and a face beaming with intelligence. He gave his name as Horace Moore. By and by Mr. Hargrave asked for the young man's mother. She was sick, and confined to her state-room, so Horace reported ; and his look told that he was anxious. The old gentleman's sympathies were excited, and he gained an introduction to the invalid, and found her to be the Clara of other years.

A little while, and the long season of shadow was forgotten, and the twain returned to the love-light and warmth of the time ago. Clara's husband had been dead three years, and she was now dependent almost entirely upon her true and faithful son for support. Young as he was, he had already gained an enviable official position at sea, and was now only on a short vacation, his own shipowners having obtained free passage for himself and mother on the present trip.

Bright hours they were. Love's young dream had not forgotten a single one of the tender memories, nor was a single strain of the old music warped from its sweet harmony. Tenderly, lovingly they talked of the far-away times, shutting up their thoughts entirely to the passages of cloud intervening. It was a space of ecstatic joy. In those few short days Clara lived a life that gave glorious light of love on the road to heaven, and Walter Hargrave felt that the bliss of a lifetime had been crowded into the golden moments.

But the blow was to fall. One day Clara's face grew very pale, as though done with earth, and her eye grew preternaturally bright, as though taking light from the angels. Walter held her to his bosom, and asked her why she breathed so quickly and so weakly.

"Oh, my darling!" he said, "go with me, and be the light and life of Ingleside."

"My only love," she answered, with a smile, "I will be your light and life in heaven if I can."

But Walter Hargrave felt that he could not have it so. With all his power of sympathy and of love he nursed the failing woman, and with all his power of faith he prayed to God. But the saving of the earth-life was not to be. The angel host had come, and awaited the new member.

The shadows of evening had fallen, and only the

throbbing of the seething heart of the great ship broke the stillness ; and even that throbbing had become of such use, and was of such consonance of rhythm, that its ceasing would have crushed the harmony of the hour. Clara's head lay upon Walter's bosom, and his strong arms were around her.

Talk of youthful love ! There is one great love of a lifetime, and when this love lasts into the evening, it is great and holy, coming nearer to the warmth of the love eternal. The true heart of youth never grows old. The brow may become seamed and shadowed ; the head may become silvered like snow ; and the limbs may forget their strength and their cunning ; but the heart of such as truly and righteously grow old is fitted, in the last hour, as the heart of a little child, for birth into the kingdom where love and goodness are ever present and eternal.

"Walter, since you have made me believe that my living might give joy to you, I would fain live a little while longer. But it may not be. The hand of transition is upon me, even now. My son, whom I dearly love, and who will have no near relative living when I am gone, must continue on to America. You will help him if you can, and see him safely on his way back to England, where he will again go on board his ship. He is a good boy, and has already a fair start in his profession."

"Clara, leave the boy with me. I will do by him as though he were my own son. But of yourself—is there not something we can do ? Oh ! I must not lose you."

"It will not be for long, Walter. You were my first—have been my only love. And in this there has been no falsehood. Farnell Moore knew from the first where my heart was, and he never spoke harshly in relation thereto. In the world to come, I know God will let the first true love of a life be the leading light of earthly

memory. Oh ! it will not be for long, Walter—not for long.”

And the grey-haired man sat there, and held the dying woman in his arms, and upon his bosom she fell asleep—fell into the peaceful sleep that is to know no more shock of earthly waking.

They were within four days' sail of New York, and Walter Hargrave preserved the body of the deceased, and had it sacredly interred at Ingleside. And he asked Horace Moore to remain with him. He had conceived a strong love for the youth, and could not give him up.

Finally, Horace consented, if Mr. Hargrave would obtain his discharge from the British East India service, to live with him as a son, provided he was allowed to make himself useful. The discharge was obtained, and after a time, the young man, at his own urgent request, was allowed to enter the office of Asher Merton, Esq., of Oxington, to study law.

“You can do as you please in this respect,” said Hargrave. “I suppose a knowledge of law will not be amiss in your care for the property which I shall leave in your charge.”

“My dear friend,” said Horace on one occasion—and he spoke with a heartiness which lasted for all time,—“I will set forth in life to steer my own ship, and work her sailing. If, in the time to come, your love and confidence shall fall upon me in a golden shower, I would have my life so attuned that the deed shall be more to my heart than the gold. I would have the deeper treasure in the memory of the giver, rather than in the gift.”

On which occasion Walter Hargrave threw his arms around the youth, and kissed him, and said :

“Dear boy, you don't know how like your mother you are. Bless her sainted spirit ! and bless you ! I love

you, Horace, and I only ask, for the rest of my days on earth, that your love may be my warmth and my joy!"

And Horace tried that it should be so. No, he did not try, his life so naturally, in love and reverence, ran its course, that it could not have been otherwise.

One day in autumn, when Horace Moore had been three years an inmate of Ingleside mansion, Edith Somerby came to him and told him that she feared Mr. Hargrave was dangerously sick.

"It cannot be," said Horace. "He has only a cold, which your kind nursing ought soon to overcome."

Horace was upon the point of starting for New York, where he had business in court to attend to for Mr. Merton. Edith advised him to let Mr. Merton go and attend to it himself. But the youth saw Mr. Hargrave, and was assured, with gushing and hearty confidence, that he might go to New York with safety. And the old man poo-poo'd excessively at the idea of his being really sick.

And so Horace Moore went to New York. He was less than four hours running down the seventy miles on the Hudson; but the case he had in charge was a chancery suit, and he had to wait his turn, so he was gone over a week. When he got back the first snow of winter had fallen, and he found Mr. Hargrave very sick.

Edith Somerby was the daughter of a poor farmer whom Walter Hargrave had materially assisted, and one who had been robbed by death of an early love, and hence the faith and strength of her prime were given to the master who had been kind to her and hers. She loved Mr. Hargrave, and understood him thoroughly; and she loved and esteemed the youth whom her master had adopted; and if she had one aim of life paramount to another, it was to serve these two.

"Horace," she said to the young man, when he

returned—it was in the evening, and Edith was much excited, “you must go at once to your guardian, and leave him not again. He is very low, and during the last three days Lyon Hargrave has been with him most of the time.”

“You speak, Edith, as though I had some great interest at stake of which I might be robbed.”

The woman caught him by the arm, and fairly hissed into his ear, so concentrated was her feeling:

“You do not know Lyon Hargrave as I know him. In all New York city I doubt if there is a den of iniquity in which he is not acquainted and well known. He went down to New York last night, and came back this morning.”

“But, Edith, Mr. Hargrave knows Lyon as well as you do.”

“Aye, but Walter Hargrave has been dying, and Lyon has engaged his weakening moments. Go at once, and see your guardian, and leave him not again, save to call me.”

Horace went, and found his friend very low indeed.

“My boy! is it you?”

“It is I, my more than father. I could not come sooner. The case did not come on until yesterday. But how is it with you?”

“It is well, Horace. Sit down by my side. I want to tell you how they tried to make me believe that you were— But why should I tattle? Sit down, my boy.”

Horace drew a chair to the bedside, and sat down.

“My dear boy, tell them to be easy with Asher Merton. I think he means well enough, but he is not strong. If I lived I should never press him. He is the father of Lily, and she is a blessed girl. Ah! my boy, you know her! Well, you both have my blessing!

Come nearer, Horace. You remember your mother? But you do not remember, for you do not know, the days when she and I were young. But you know what she told me with her dying speech, my boy, that she would be mine, and only mine, in the world to come? You remember?"

"Yes, dear guardian, I remember very well."

"Bless you, my boy. Draw your seat nearer. Ah, my boy, I see shadows on your face. They flit across like clouds. But never mind. I doubt if my eyes are as good as they once were. Those same dark spots look all light now."

The sick man called for drink, and then asked Horace to go and call Edith.

"I have business," he said, "and I want Edith present. I have great confidence in Edith. And you will confide in her, Horace—both you and Lily. She is a true woman, is Edith Somerby."

"I know she is true and loyal to you, sir," said the youth, warmly. "She loves and reveres you."

"Aye. She is a good girl. Go and call her. Say to her that I would see her at once."

Horace went as directed, and having found Edith, they returned together to the sick man's chamber, where the housekeeper trimmed the lamp, and replenished the fire. Then she went to the bedside, and reported:

"I am here, good master."

"Is it you, Edith?"

"Yes."

"Why do you leave me in the dark?"

"Do you find it dark?"

"Of course I do. Is it not night?"

"Yes."

"Then light the lamps."

Edith lighted two more lamps, and then asked Hargrave if he could see. He did not answer her at once, but after a time he put out his hands with a convulsive movement, and said :

“It is finished. Tell Clara I am coming !”

And those were the last words he spoke. He passed away with a smile upon his face, as though he had smiled gratefully and lovingly upon some seraphic visitor.

Both Edith and Horace were too stricken to do more than send for Mr. Merton, and then to keep order in the house.

Mr. Asher Merton, with whom Horace had studied, and who was a lawyer of considerable ability, had been for years Mr. Hargrave's attorney, and he came in on this evening to take charge of the papers, and put certain books and documents under lock and key.

It was after ten o'clock when the lawyer went away, and he left a young man named Stephen Cahill to watch in the library, through the night.

“I don't know as there is any need of it,” he said to Edith, before he left, “but it is well enough to have a watcher, and I didn't think any of your folks would be in just the mood to do it. Stephen is not so bright as some, but he is faithful, and may be depended upon for keeping awake.”

Edith afterwards remarked to Horace that she should have preferred a different watcher, but since Stephen Cahill had been set to the work, she did not care to object.

It was midnight before Edith and Horace retired. Shortly before the midnight hour, while the young man was engaged in writing letters of the sad event to numerous friends of the deceased, his attention was called by his companion to a sound in the rear yard.

"I have heard it twice before," she said, "and this time I heard it very plainly. Some one seems to be walking in the yard."

Horace got up and went to the window. Then he went to the back door, and stepped out upon the stoop. He saw nothing out of the way, and he heard nothing. He came back, and told Edith she must have heard the horses in the barn. But she did not think so. She fancied she had been long enough used to the sounds from the barn not to mistake them thus. Thereupon Horace smilingly replied that he would go out with a lantern after he had finished his letters, and take a careful survey.

"I will go out now, if you say so, Edith." "No," she said, with a slight touch of doggedness in her tone. "Don't let my instincts influence you against your better judgment."

How slight a thing, how light a breath, will influence a man to turn the cold shoulder to the known good-will of his best friend. Had Edith hinted by even a smile that she would go out then and there with Horace Moore, he would have forsaken all else for the time required; but she showed a little pique, and he straightway, fool for the moment, answered with pique in his own bosom. And thus the light of the lantern was not brought to bear upon the darkness without at all that night. Had Horace gone out, as Edith had evidently wished, he might have found something that could have gone no further under that light, but which, in the permitted gloom, went on to a length which only uninterrupted villainy could have foreseen.

As it was, Horace wrote on until after midnight, and then went out with his lantern. But he found nothing, and told Edith she might retire and sleep with assurance of safety. She bade him good-night in the old

pleasant way, but it was plain from her face that she was not easy. Upon the chamber stairs, as she afterward confessed, she had more than half a mind to go back and bid Horace sit up himself and watch, but she thought better (or worse) of it, and went on.

During the night strange noises were heard by other inmates of the house, and in the morning there was much questioning. And the groom and the cow-boy found heavy tracks in the yard and around the house—tracks which they could not legitimately account for; but many people had come and gone on honest business during the night, and nothing could be made of it. On this morning Edith appeared sad and careworn; but she said she had not been disturbed after she retired. Neither had Horace.

Since the papers of the deceased were all under seal of a recognized attorney, no settlement of business was attempted until after the funeral.

The funeral was held on Sunday, and great was the concourse attending. Many came up from New York, and many came down from Albany and Troy. And there were sincere mourners. Truly, a shadow was upon Ingleside—a darker shadow, in fact, than was generally thought. Not only was the good master dead, but many bright hopes were stricken in the event.

On the following day, Monday, Mr. Merton summoned all interested to attend in the library of the mansion, he himself being accompanied by proper official witnesses. Horace Moore and Edith Somerby were there, and most of the household servants were present, as it was generally understood that all had been remembered in the dead man's will.

And also present was Lyon Hargrave, son and only child of Walter Hargrave's brother, Thomas.

Thomas had been a younger brother, and had died away from home. Walter had taken the orphan nephew so far under his charge as to send him to school, and pay all his expenses until he was twenty-one; and after that he had set the young man up in business, promising to help him still further if he would help himself. But Lyon Hargrave would help himself only in the way of evil. His uncle having learned that his life in New York was simply the life of an abandoned gamester, and having sought in vain to reclaim him, let him go his way. Lyon was now five-and-twenty; rather below the medium height and size; with black hair and black eyes, and a sallow face inherited from an Italian mother, but possessing much grace and beauty of form and feature. But there was evil in his beauty, and there was danger in his grace. His eyes and his face were beautiful like the eyes and the gleaming face of the snake, and his bodily movements were not unlike the sinuous movements of the python.

And when those immediately interested had been assembled, Mr. Merton removed his locks from the doors and the drawers of the deceased; and when it is understood that property, real and personal, to the amount of a million dollars, hung in the balance, we shall not wonder that there was anxiety.



CHAPTER II.

OUTGROWINGS OF THE SHADOW.

Of those present in the library of Ingleside while the attorney overhauled the private papers of the dead master, none were more nervous and eager than was Edith Somerby. There had been a cloud upon her from the first—a premonition of evil—which she could not shake off. Was it that she had, individually, great interests at stake, or was it from some cause more extraneous? None could tell. She sat like a statue carved from marble, her hands closely clasped, and her lips bloodless from compression.

So was Lyon Hargrave eager and anxious; but he was not pale like Edith Somerby. He flushed and paled by turns, as though the blow which was to annihilate him might be suspended unseen. His hands were clasped and unclasped, and he sat like a hare watchful of the bay of the hounds, starting at a sound, and anon endeavoring to appear self-possessed.

Horace Moore was nervous, but not as others were nervous. He seemed like one who felt out of place. In fact, he said to Edith, before entering, that he wished he could be legitimately and properly away. He felt like an interloper. Could he have been placed back one short month, and allowed to express his wish to his

guardian, he would have said: "Forget no one else in memory of me. Let not your bounty make me a mark for the scandal of the heartless and the thoughtless. Let me be self-sustaining." He would have given up wealth; but there was one thing he could not have so readily given up; and because this latter thing became, unwillingly, a concomitant of the wealth, an influence was to operate upon his after-life which he might not otherwise have felt.

Other eager faces were there—the faces of servants who had served long and faithfully, and who felt sure they would be remembered. To such, a small sum would have been doubly a blessing—a blessing of memory from one whom they had loved and honored, and a blessing, indeed, upon the hard pathway of their toilsome life.

At the end of half an hour spent by the attorney, with two of his assistants, he turned from his labors and spoke:

"My friends, I do not find a will. I doubt if Mr. Hargrave made one."

For a little time the silence of death reigned in the apartment. Edith Somerby was the first to speak. She did not rise, but sat erect and pale, with only the intense light of her eyes to reveal how deep were her feelings.

"Mr. Merton," she said, "do you not *know* that Walter Hargrave made a will?"

"I know that he made several, Miss Somerby."

"But he has made one within a year?"

"Perhaps so."

"And the witnesses thereto were men of your own selection?"

"I had to call the witnesses, Miss, seeing that all the

testator's immediate friends were directly interested in the instrument."

"You have made no will for Mr. Hargrave since that time?"

"I have not."

"And you do not know that said will has been destroyed?"

"I know nothing about it. Mr. Hargrave was not in the habit of consulting me except he required my aid. The destroying of a will was very simple. There was no copy, and our friend had only to do what he pleased with his own."

"But, sir, I ask you," pursued Edith, a little color coming to her face, "would Walter Hargrave have willingly died intestate?"

"That is a question I cannot answer, Miss Somerby."

"But you should know, sir—you who did all his legal business. Had he not particular reasons for not wishing to pass away without leaving a will behind him?"

"I certainly know of no such reasons," answered the lawyer, crisply.

Edith flushed to the eyes.

"You *do* know of such reasons, Mr. Merton. You know how, in the absence of a will, all this property must go, and you know that Walter Hargrave had most particular reasons for not wishing it thus to go."

"Miss Somerby," said Merton, with judicial dignity, "you are beside yourself. Perhaps," he added, with an abortive attempt at a smile, "you dwell reluctantly upon your own loss."

Edith arose to her feet, and spoke with forced calmness; though with deep and bitter feeling:

"Mr Merton, you have no right to make that remark. If Walter Hargrave's will is found, be sure my name will be found in it; but I have not thought of myself.

on this occasion. I have thought of others here around me. Of our good master's bounty I have largely shared. Not so these true and faithful toilers who have borne the burden and heat of the day in his service. How will they be left?"

At this point Lyon Hargrave arose. Thus far he had sat like one who combats a foe he cannot see. As he arose he grasped the back of his chair for support, and a fierce wrath, arising from a cause long and deeply seated, gave him strength and steadiness. Ordinarily he was not weak, and only contending emotions of great power had now for the time unnerved him.

"Pending further search for my uncle's will," he said, "let this matter rest as it should, in the hands of my uncle's attorney. It has been asked if Mr. Hargrave would not have surely left a will could he have had his own way. I am not sure of that. We can afford, I think, to speak plainly. The whole thing hinges upon this single proposition: Would Walter Hargrave have left his wealth to his own flesh and blood, to the son of his own brother, or would he have set at defiance all known laws of consanguinity, and left his property to the offspring of a mere adventuress—a woman who tricked and betrayed him in his youth only to succeed in fooling him in his childish old age? I know that the heart of the poor old man did for a season warm toward this interloper; but I have reason to believe that he came at length to realize what an imbecile part he was acting. If you ask me how, when the shadow of death gave solemn import to his actions, Walter Hargrave would have knowingly and willingly acted, I tell you plainly he would have answered to the calls of those ties of blood which had been dear to him from his cradle. And you will permit me to say one thing more: Should fortune place this estate in my possession, let

the long-tried and faithful servants of Ingleside rest assured that generous remembrance shall be theirs. My uncle could not possibly have done more for them than I will do."

At this point Horace Moore, who had paled and flushed by turns, started to his feet, now pale as death, with his hands and his teeth firmly shut. But before he could speak Edith grasped him by the arm and pulled him back, and whispered something into his ear. What she whispered was simply a reminder to the youth that he was at present an utterly powerless nobody in the presence of August Law; and she told him that his passions were more powerless than was he in his proper self. She advised him to remain silent.

Lyon Hargrave, seeing the movement, assumed a smile, and addressed the assembled servants.

"My friends—you who have served my uncle—I may say to you that in the absence of a will the law will put me in charge of Ingleside, and I take this occasion, seeing that you are all together, to notify you that, so far as I have power, I retain you in service agreeably to my uncle's later provisions, and in addition thereto I shall claim the privilege of making you each a present of from three to five hundred dollars. Mr. Merton will understand and second my plan."

The male and female servants of Ingleside were not in the habit of deep thought. They had not been paid to think, and hence had not cultivated the accomplishment. This grand offer of Lyon Hargrave they could exactly understand and appreciate, and they liked it, as was manifest from their signs of happy approval. They were only human. They recognized the coming man, and rendered him homage accordingly.

Horace Moore saw the signs, and as speedily as possible he left the library. The whispered counsel of

Edith was not lost upon him. He knew himself well enough to know that if he remained and allowed himself to speak, he should come to hard words with Lyon Hargrave; and between him and the man who had descended to cast a slur upon his mother, there could have been but one result from such an altercation. In one of the small drawing-rooms, Edith met him, and laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Horace, what will you do?" she asked the question in fear and trembling.

The youth stood for a moment in thought, and then answered, with a smile:

"Good Edith, I am a free man. If wrong has been done, I have not done it. I would rather be the sufferer than the doer of wrong; but in this case I know not that I am even a sufferer."

"Horace Moore, are you sincere?"

"I speak to you, Edith, from the very heart of my heart. I will go and see Lily. She may have to wait for me a few years; but joy will come at length. I know that Lily will be true. And I will go forth, young and strong, and do the battle as others have done it before me."

A shadow passed over Edith Somerby's face, and Horace observed it.

"Do you doubt me?" he asked.

"No, Horace, I doubt nothing. Let the future reveal its own secrets. If you feel strong, pray that your strength may not desert you. As for this business of the will, I know that a foul wrong has been done. I know that the will was in existence when you went to New York, for Mr. Hargrave spoke to me about it. He told me that he should leave great power in your hands, and that even I must look to you for a fulfilment of his wishes regarding myself. I know that evil has been

done, but I know not how to unearth it. I do not think Mr. Merton would have lent himself directly to any wrong-doing ; but it is very plain to be seen that he is now in favor of Lyon Hargrave ; and I think I can see how he has been operated upon. He is in debt to this estate some thousands of dollars, and Lyon has intimated that in the event of his possession the debt shall be forgiven. The poor man does not know that you had directions to cancel that same debt. But, Horace, we must rest awhile. Be you careful, and keep clear of Lyon Hargrave. His mother was Italian, and he has dangerous blood in him. And he did not inherit a saintly spirit from his father. In truth, he is a bad man."

"Fear not, Edith. I will do all that may become a man, and I will do no more. And I promise you that I will not take any unwonted step without first consulting you."

They shook hands and separated. Horace regarded Edith Somerby as a second mother, and she loved him as she might have loved a dear son or a brother. Her heart, which might have been given in warmer love, lay buried in the church-yard at Oxington. We say this because it was whispered at Ingleside that the house-keeper would have won the fair youth for herself if she could. But no such wish or thought ever entered her mind. No doubt she often said to herself—her softened eye many a time betrayed the emotion—that blessed would be the maiden who should wholly win him. She appreciated him thoroughly, and esteemed him highly.

On the evening of this day there sat in the small parlor of Mr. Merton's residence a maiden who had been in tears. In years she was nineteen ; in stature just a perfect woman, such as Raphael might have selected for

his Madonna, or such as Phidias might have taken as a model for his virgin goddess Athena ; and yet there was superadded the warmth and grace of love and goodness. Down into her heart the artist might never have looked. Had he done so, he would have found it human, with much of the strength, and some of the weakness, which true women have inherited from the mother of all living. Her hair was a dark brown, wavy and tastefully arranged ; her brow was full, but not too high ; and her lower features, cut after the Grecian mould, were symmetrical and beautiful in the extreme. A single shadow, the slightest line, can change the whole expression of a face ; and Lily Merton's face might have been made into a proud and queenly face by some such touch. As it was, she possessed all the grace and beauty of the artist's proud conception, with all the warmth and affection of a true and loving woman.

As Lily Merton sat by the centre-table, with her head resting upon her hand, her father entered the apartment—the same Asher Merton who is already known to us. He took a seat on the opposite side of the table from his daughter, and after a little pause, said :

“Lily, you have probably heard of the result of the examination into Walter Hargrave's affairs?”

“I have heard,” she answered, without looking up.

“Who told you?”

“Horace.”

“Horace Moore ! Has he been here ?”

“Yes. He went away only a short time since.”

The attorney made a movement of impatience, but did not speak until the shadow was gone from his face.

“My child, I trust I may never have the heart to interfere with your true good and welfare ; and I trust you may never have the heart to crush and bruise your father.”

"My father!" exclaimed Lily, under her breath, and with a look of unutterable surprise; "what do you mean? *I* crush and bruise! Surely, I do not understand you."

"My dear Lily, truth is best spoken in few words, and perhaps I had better give to you briefly my thoughts on this occasion. In the first place, you are aware that I am in debt to the estate of Ingleside over six thousand dollars, for money advanced to me at various times by Mr. Hargrave. I tell you frankly, my child, the payment of that sum would reduce me to utter penury. In fact, I cannot pay it. When I gave my countenance to the addresses you have received from Horace Moore, I regarded him as the adopted son and heir of Walter Hargrave; but it is proved that he was not so. Lyon Hargrave is the heir, and he has become my client. So young Moore sinks at once to the position of an unknown adventurer."

Lily started up from her seat, and took a turn across the room. She clenched her hands until the nails of the fingers fairly eat into the palms, and her lips were compressed until they were bloodless. She could quell the storm that arose in her bosom, but she could not subdue the light that blazed in her resplendent eyes.

"Hush!" she said, when she finally stopped before her father. "I am not fit to answer you now, and you are not fit to speak now upon this subject."

"I have but ventured to speak to you a thought, my child."

"Wait until it shall be known beyond a peradventure that there is no will before you assign relative places to the two men whom you have mentioned."

"Ah, Lily, you must not borrow that hope, neither for yourself, nor for Horace Moore. I know very well that there is no will. In his sickness, when death was

near, Walter Hargrave put away all his old animosities, and took back to his love the son of his only brother. And then, he destroyed the will."

"Do you *know* that he destroyed it?"

"Of course I know it."

"*How?*"

"How?"

"Yes, how?"

"Why, there is no will to be found."

"But there was a will not long since?"

"Yes."

"Then, how do you know, even if it be destroyed, that Walter Hargrave destroyed it?"

"Because he had reason; and I honor him for that reason. He had shut out all enmity from his heart, and was willing to bring back his own blood to revere his memory."

"How do you know this?"

"How do I know it?"

"Aye. Did Walter Hargrave ever so much as whisper to you such a thing or thought?"

"Lyon told me himself; and it was told to Lyon."

"And yet, when you made Walter Hargrave's will, you could not accept our good old curate and Christian teacher for years as a witness thereto, because he was interested as a legatee!"

"Lily!"

"But you can accept this monstrous assertion from Lyon Hargrave, whose very soul is at stake in the hazard of the die he is casting."

"Lily!"

"I have spoken."

"But, Lily, my child, do you realize that we may both be in this man's power? If the will were to have been found I should have found it. As it now is, I

say, there can be no will in existence. And, in the absence of such an instrument, Lyon Hargrave becomes sole possessor of Ingleside, and, as master of Ingleside, we know that the time-honored custom of making him Justice of Oxington will not be departed from. Do you not see that he thus will have power? Be reasonable, my child, and let not Lyon hear the droppings of your prejudiced and careless tongue."

"He shall hear nothing," said Lily, with stern calmness, "which he does not provoke. But, I warn you, my father, do not let him provoke me."

"Lily, my child!"

"My father," cried the maiden, rising again from the seat which she had resumed, and standing erect in the majesty of her womanhood, "you have spoken of Walter Hargrave's heart. Do not suffer the expression to come so impiously from your lips again. Of his heart you know nothing. Of true manly heart Lyon Hargrave never knew. *I* know what Walter Hargrave's heart was, and I know *where* it was. With my head pillowed upon his bosom he told to me the story. His grandest heart—the heart of celestial love—was buried with the mother of Horace Moore, and with her sainted spirit it arose to heaven; and in heaven it will be his again. He did not lose it forever. The true heart is never lost. The instinct of God is in it, and its destiny must be final peace. But, oh! how often do years of sorrow intervene between the loss and the reunion!"

"Lily!"

"Let us say no more, my father."

The maiden resumed her seat, and then continued:

"I do not wish to know what brought you hither at this time. We will say you only came to acquaint me with the result of your search for the will. So be it,

And now let me speak with you before you leave. Of Horace Moore we will say nothing. He is under a cloud, and deserves only sympathy. Of Lyon Hargrave I have this to say : Keep him for the present away from me."

"Lily!"

"Can you not understand me? Do you not know, of your own judicial wit, that Lyon Hargrave had better be kept away from me?"

Asher Merton looked upon the face of his daughter, and felt his own degraded weakness, and without another word, unless an entirely unnecessary *staccato* in the closing of the door could have been deemed such, he quitted the apartment.



CHAPTER III.

THE SERPENT SHOWS HIS FANGS.

A week had elapsed from the day on which Mr. Merton had first examined the papers left by the late master of Ingleside. All possible search had been made; discussion had been held, *pro* and *con*, and all interested had had, through invitation of the attorney, opportunity to present claims, or objections to claims.

It was on another Monday evening, and Horace Moore and Edith Somerby sat in the old drawing-room of the mansion, where they had sat many an evening with the good old master, and it was to be their last evening together.

The fiat of the surrogate had gone forth. Ingleside being so nearly related to the surrogate's office through the official position of its late master, the office had, at the recommendation of Mr. Merton, especially and expeditiously looked into the matter, and very comprehensive letters had been issued to Lyon Hargrave, Esquire, who was thereby not only empowered, but *required* to take possession forthwith, "that the rights and immunities of those dependent be not infringed." So read the latter end of the document which came from the surrogate's office, under a stupendous seal, to LYON HARGRAVE, ESQ.

Horace and Edith sat together on that Monday

evening, the twenty-first of December, and they knew that on the morrow they were to leave. The new master had informed Edith that he should no longer require her services, and he had bade Horace make his home at Ingleside as long as he pleased, saying, at the close of his permission :

"I will not turn adrift any poor waif whom my uncle chose to make the recipient of his bounty."

"You see this," said Horace, exhibiting to Edith the note he had received from Lyon Hargrave.

"I see it," answered Edith, "and I am glad to know that you have faithfully kept your promise to me. You have not met that man?"

"Oh ! Edith, if you could know all the pain of struggle I have endured to be true to my promise, you would set me down as a saint. If I had not, one week ago, given you that solemn promise, I feel that Lyon Hargrave would not now be living."

"Or you, Horace, which?"

"As I say, Edith. Should that man ever meet me in open enmity, he would fall. I know it. He may overcome me in secret, as the serpent overcomes, but I should despise myself if I thought he could ever do it manfully. But let that pass. I have not met him, and I do not mean to meet him. Thanks to the noble truth and heroic devotion of Lily, he has been shut out from her ; so I have not run aloul of him there."

"And Lily—she is true?" questioned Edith.

"As true as the needle to its mysterious attraction of the pole. She loves me, Edith, and that is all."

"And that is enough!" said Edith Somerby, solemnly. "If she loves you with the whole true woman, only death, or a near approach to death, can swerve her. As for her heart it can never be swerved. Oh, my brother, or my son, in this hour learn from me,

that the heart, the whole, God-given heart, of woman once given, can never be reclaimed—never ! Heaven may find it for a sainted loved one, but earth can never know it again.”

After this Edith Somerby bowed her head upon her hands, and for a long time a solemn silence prevailed. It was at length broken by Horace :

“Dear Edith—I dare call you dear since you love me as I can be loved by one who is not to me a lover—dear to me by ties which claim all my gratitude, and all my holy reverence—reverence which I might have given a mother had she lived, and which I transferred to you when my guardian brought me hither—we are to separate on the morrow. What the future may bring for us we cannot tell, but I wish to say to you this : Let what will come, I shall always find joy and satisfaction in memory of your kindness to me. When I pray to God be sure you will not be forgotten.”

“The same thought of you is in my own mind, Horace ; and I shall pray earnestly. I am not yet prepared to believe that foul iniquity can forever triumph.”

“You are firm in the belief, then,” said the young man, trying to smile, “that wrong has been done?”

“Aye, Horace, I feel it ; I know it. Ah ! could we get at the secret of that night when we heard the noises in the yard, we should know more than we know now.”

“Why do you let that thought trouble you?”

“It does not trouble me, and yet it occupies my mind. But we will say no more about it. If, in the time to come, we are to know more than we now know, I trust the knowledge may have the quality to make us grateful. And now, Horace, whither do you turn you

steps? My advice is, that you enter into the practice of your profession."

"You mean law?"

"Yes."

"No, Edith. I prefer the sea; and I feel that I am a better sailor than lawyer. My opportunity is good. I have been promised the position of second mate on board one of the finest ships sailing out of New York. We are going to India. An old and dear friend of my guardian owns the ship, and through his favor I gain the place."

"Then you are determined in this respect?"

"To go to sea, yes."

"So be it. We shall meet again before you sail?"

"Yes, Edith. I will come to your father's house."

"I may have something to communicate."

They conversed awhile longer, and then separated.

On the following morning, Edith Somerby took the stage-coach for her home, and Horace Moore went out and took a room for a few days at a hotel in Oxington; and before noon, Lyon Hargrave had entered upon the premises as master of Ingleside, with no power apparent to dispute his possession. He did not hold up his head proudly when he entered the old mansion; but he cast sidelong glances at the servants, and his first call, when he had seated himself, was for brandy.

On Wednesday evening Horace Moore called at Mr. Merton's, and was admitted to Lily's presence.

The attorney was away at Ingleside. He had not seen Horace since Monday, but he knew that the youth had planned to go to sea, and he had chosen to make no demonstration of his real intention until the object of his dislike had gone. At heart, Asher Merton was not bad. He was not positive in quality, anyway. Had Horace Moore been master of Ingleside he would

have preferred him for a husband to his daughter, but since Lyon Hargrave was the fortunate possessor, he was willing to give the hand of his child in that direction. In fact, he had promised Lyon that the girl should be his.

"Don't make haste," said Lyon. "Don't frighten the girl. I can wait. When this interloper is out of the way she may be induced to perform a duty which she must see is incumbent upon her—the duty of sustaining her father."

And on this very evening Lyon Hargrave and Asher Merton sat over their wine and planned for the desired consummation.

Meantime Horace Moore was taking leave of his love. He was to go to New York on the morrow, and it might be many months before they met again.

"Lily," spoke the young man, holding her hand and gazing tenderly into her beautiful face, "I am grasping and selfish enough to accept the pledge you offer. I know that when your father smiled approvingly upon our love he regarded me as the heir of Ingleside ; and you, too, had—"

"Hush !" interrupted the girl, raising her hand with reproving gesture. "No matter what we then thought of Ingleside. It was not Ingleside I loved. I loved you, my darling, and I love you only more now than I loved you then. I will wait for you till the end of time, if need be. At first I would have preferred that you should select law as a profession, and remain near me ; but I have come to feel that it is better as it is. Do you know, Horace, I think I shall love you all the better when you are far away ? O ! who has said that absence can conquer love ? The truth was not in the man who said so. True love, my darling, must grow stronger and deeper in absence. O ! don't you feel so ?"

"Blessed one!" cried Horace, taking her to his bosom, "I have no words to speak the love I feel, the love that can never die, the love that is to me the crown of my life. When I am away I shall wear your dear image in my mind always. I have spent years upon the trackless deep, and in those times I wore the image of my mother as the mystic charm of the hard life. She was a good woman, Lily, a blessed woman, but she was never wholly happy. You have heard the story."

"Yes," said Lily, with moistening eyes. "And I think I can feel in fancy all that she felt in fact. Oh, what if, in the belief that you were dead, I should be dragged into marriage with another, and in the end should know that you lived? O! horrible!"

"Lily!"

"Darling!"

And so they talked far into the evening, and at length the hour for parting came. They did not know, as they stood in the hall, that they were watched—that a pair of fiery eyes was upon them, and a pair of unscrupulous ears open to their words.

"It must be a full year, darling, before we meet again; but our love will bear us company. The width of oceans cannot hold our hearts asunder. I go to New York in the morning, and I shall not return. I will write to you before I sail, and you will write to me."

A kiss, and a blessing, a few murmured words from heart to heart, and they separated.

Horace Moore walked to his hotel, and shortly afterwards Lyon Hargrave left the dwelling of the attorney, and went to Ingleside.

Hargrave entered the library, where lights were burning, and paced to and fro for some time. The clock upon the mantel told him it was half-past eleven.

"I must go to New York," he said, to himself, "and I must be there before him."

A few more turns, and he called a servant, and directed him to saddle two horses and bring them to the door.

"I want you to go with me to the landing," he said, "and return with the horses. I have received important word from New York, and must be in the city to-morrow morning. I think we can catch the night boat from Albany?"

"Yes, sir, plenty of time for that, if the ice lets the boats run."

"There is no ice at all in the river yet. You may bring the horses, and you may say to those who inquire that business has called me away."

Lyon reached the landing at Oxington in season for the boat, and was in New York in the morning. He crossed the city to the East River side, and entered a den known as "The Foul Anchor." It was foul enough, goodness knows, and the signs of the morning told that there had been late drinking, and hard, through the night. The new-comer was known in the place, and was permitted to pass through into the rear parlor, where the keeper joined him.

"I want to find Sugg Witkill," said Hargrave.

"You're on his track, old fellow. He was here last night, and can't be far away."

"Is Molly here?"

"Yes."

"Then let her go and find him. If she will bring him to me in an hour I will give her a dollar."

The woman thus alluded to set forth on her mission, and in less than half an hour returned with the object of her search, who was at once introduced into the parlor.

Mr. Sugg Witkill was a man thirty years of age ; of medium size ; slouchy but strong in his build ; with a keen black eye ; a face angular and strongly marked ; and not, at first sight, particularly ill-looking. The broken nose, and the seams and scars otherwheres, would seem to indicate that his life had been a tough one ; and when you had heard him speak, and had watched the play of his features under the working of his thoughts, you would have been apt to set him down as a man who could be very wicked—a man dangerous and crafty. He nodded respectfully as he entered the parlor, but when the host had gone, his face took a more familiar look.

“How now, old fellow ? What has called you on this night trip ?”

“I want to see you alone, Sugg.”

“Then I guess you'd better come to my room. I've got quarters on South street. We can be quiet as the grave there.”

So to Sugg's room on South street they went. It was not an inviting place for comfort, but it was inviting enough for Lyon Hargrave's present purpose. At the suggestion of the host—for so Sugg styled himself—brandy and sugar and hot water were produced, and when a couple of hot toddies had been disposed of, the master of the quiet retreat signified that he was ready for business.

“And,” he added, with a significant wink, “only very important business could have called you away from Ingleside in this fashion. I hope nothing has gone amiss yet ?”

“Nothing, Sugg.”

“There hain't any sign of the will turned up yet ?”

“No. I think it was burned.”

“I'm sure it was. I can take my oath of it.”

"Are you serious, Sugg? Do you really and honestly believe the fire took it?"

"Why, bless you! how could it have been otherwise? Wasn't I at the fire? a good fire, too, burning in the open fire-place. It's ashes entirely. Set that down for a fact."

"Really, Sugg, I think it must have been so. But enough of this. I don't care to think of it. Both you and Matt must have been drunk—"

"Lyon, my boy, we know what we know. My soul! I don't never want such another dose as that was."

"No offence, Sugg. Let it pass. And now, look ye. Do you know the ship *Speedwell*?"

"Of course I know her. She lays within a stone's throw of where we now sit. And she's a beauty."

"Sugg, Horace Moore is going out in that ship as second-mate. While he lives I can never feel entirely safe. I don't know exactly how much he knows of the will, nor do I know what his plans in that direction may be; but he has an attraction in old Merton's daughter which will bind him to the neighborhood of Ingleside. And, furthermore, while he is living, and liable at any time to drop down upon the old place, he has a friend in Edith Somerby, who is to be feared. That woman suspects me. She has shown it plainly; and I dare not attempt to buy her off. With Horace Moore out of our way, that knot is cut. Now, what have you to bind you to New York? If you will ship on board the *Speedwell* I will make it a good thing for you."

"Go on," nodded Sugg, without a sign to show his thought.

"The ship is bound for the East Indies," pursued Lyon, "and in the months that cover the voyage, you will easily find means to give the young man his drop from the stage."

"That's poetical."

"Aye, Sugg, and I'll set the poetry to a handsome tune if you will undertake the work."

Sugg Witkill had set the dish of water upon the stove, where it had kept hot. He brewed another toddy, and when he had drunk it, he said :

"Now look'e, old fellow, I am going to talk honest. I would as lief be away from New York awhile as not. In fact, it might be for my interest to leave. But aboard that ship there will be hard work."

"For which you shall be amply paid."

"Say, about how much?"

"Set your own price."

"Then, let us call it a thousand dollars down, and two thousand when I come back and tell you that Horace Moore is dropped. How's that?"

"Sugg, will you do it?"

"I will. That is, I'll try. We don't know yet as I can get shipped."

"I wish I dared to help you in that direction; but I think I had better not. But there can be no doubt. I saw the owner's advertisement this morning. The shipping list is still open."

"Look'e, Lyon; you just stay right where you are till I go out and see. Don't you feel like taking a nap?"

"I haven't slept for four-and-twenty hours."

"Then camp on my bed, and wait until I come back. I'll ship on board the *Speedwell* if the thing is possible. And I rather like it, too."

Lyon was shown the bed, and Sugg went out upon his mission.

An hour passed. Lyon Hargrave lay upon the bed, but he did not sleep. At the end of the hour Witkill came back with a gleam of satisfaction upon his battered visage.

"Keno!" said he, as he closed the door behind him.

"You have done it, Sugg?"

"Hold on. I am dry."

Sugg found the water hot, and having made and drunk another toddy he sat down and reported.

"All right, old boy. I am shipped on board the *Speedwell*. Seamen just now are not plenty. I had no difficulty at all. And there's room for more. Now say, I think I will take my thousand dollars with me. There may be a chance to turn it over in Calcutta."

"How will you carry it?"

"I shall find a way."

"But how will you account for its possession?"

"Oh, bless you! that is nothing. I shall call it the fortunate turn of the cards. That is not a great sum to win."

"As you please, Sugg. You shall have the money to-night. And now, my boy, you have your work before you. It will not be difficult."

"Lyon Hargrave, don't you borrow one bit of trouble. Men often fall overboard at sea; and I have heard of cases where they went over at night, nobody could tell how. Put your hand there."

Lyon gave his hand.

"You will be true to me, and I'll be true to you. Horace Moore will not come home in the *Speedwell*! You can set that down as a fixed fact."

"Sugg, you and I must be true to each other. We have worked too much in company to be otherwise. I shall see you off. Do you know when the ship sails?"

"As soon as she can get off. I am to report for duty on Monday."

"Then on Monday I will come down again. I will meet you here."

"All right. But about the money?"

"I will bring it here this afternoon. When will you meet me?"

"Call at two o'clock."

And at two o'clock Lyon Hargrave paid into Sugg Witkill's hand one thousand dollars. And he thought it a good investment. He felt sure of his man. He had known Witkill for years, and in many ways, and he had not a shadow of doubt that the man would keep his word. And in the keeping of that word a safe removal would be made of the one man who might possibly stand between him and Ingleside. When he took the boat for the return he felt relieved of a burden. The weight of the crime he did not feel at all. He only knew fear in thought of the possible detection of another crime. Once launched as he had launched, and the great need was to cover up tracks that might betray. In following his own selfish ends he cared not what might be the cost of suffering, of wrong, or even of life itself, to others.



CHAPTER IV.

MATT BUNGO.

On Thursday Horace Moore went to New York, and late in the afternoon he went on board the *Speedwell*, where he chanced to meet the captain, who had come on board not two minutes previously, and who had not calculated upon remaining beyond the time required for depositing a package in his room.

Captain John Percy was the man, and a fine specimen of the true Yankee sailor he was. He was not a heavy man ; but what he lost in bulk he more than made up in fineness of quality. He was quick, active and energetic, with his wits always in the ascendant. He had light, wavy hair ; light blue eyes ; and a mild, handsome face. He was a good seaman, an accomplished navigator, and a safe master ; and, moreover, he could justly estimate and appreciate a true man, and treat him accordingly.

" Ah, Mr. Moore, I am glad to have hit you. I will go back into the cabin with you. Have you come to report for duty ?"

" As I promised, yes, sir."

" I am glad, for I wish to-morrow to go to Philadelphia, and I want one of my own officers here to examine those who may apply for berths. Our complement of men is not quite complete. We can, of course, at any time, draw on our shipper. He has candidates in plenty,

such as they are. But I want a few more able seamen. I shipped a man this afternoon, not exactly such a man as I would have preferred, but a competent seaman. I think I may trust you to examine any who may apply?"

"I don't think a man could deceive me with regard to his knowledge of seamanship, sir. But touching moral qualifications—"

"As to that," broke in the captain, "all applicants must pass muster at the office of the owner before they come here. Our advertisement gives that direction. Yet you will exercise your own judgment on all points. And now, if you are ready for duty, I must get you to run up town, and see Mr. Dwinal. He is stopping with his daughter in Chelsea. Letters have come in to-day which he ought to see, and we want his orders. You can take a carriage. I think you know the way?"

"Yes. I have been there."

Captain Percy arranged the business as he would have it delivered to Mr. Dwinal, and then went with his officer on deck, remarking, as they separated:

"You will return this evening, and take charge of the ship until I get back. Mr. Huxton will not be here before Monday."

Horace walked up to the Hook, and there took a saddle-horse. He found Mr. Dwinal in a pretty cottage, with quite a milk-farm attached, in a rural suburb of that day, which has since given place to the onward flow of brick and mortar, and which must have been not far from the spot now marked by the junction of Ninth Avenue and Twenty-ninth street.

Not far up town, is it? Really in the heart of the city. And yet, in 1840, when the middle-aged man of to-day was just entering upon his manful life, that spot was far away from the city's busy tide—really and truly in the country.

Mr. Alfred Dwinal was one of the oldest of the Manhattan merchants, and principal owner of the *Speedwell*. He received the youthful officer kindly, and when the business had been done he insisted that Horace should stop to tea; and after tea he gathered from his guest the story of the late events at Ingleside.

"My dear boy," he said, when the whole had been told, "I know Lyon Hargrave. His uncle once got him a situation in a house in which I was silently interested. He proved himself a rascal, and I know that Walter Hargrave paid some thousands of dollars to shield him from the law. Believe me, if he has come by treachery into this possession, he cannot prosper."

"Mr. Dwinal," returned our hero, with a smile that was full of manly strength, "I know that I have the sympathy of all good men who know me; but I tell you truly that I would not exchange places with Lyon Hargrave, even were he clear of crime in this matter of his uncle's will. I have really nothing to complain of. I have health, strength and a profession; and if I prove myself deserving of friends, I believe I shall find them."

"Right, my boy. Lay the foundations deep and strong in truth and honor, and the super-structure of manhood's life will be blessed. I am glad you came up this evening. I shall feel better in the knowledge of the character of my officers. In Captain Percy you will find a true and reliable friend. He is not only a good sailor, but he is a good man."

And so they pleasantly conversed until the shadows of evening drew on, and at an hour later than he had anticipated Horace set forth on his return. The air was damp and chill, and he put his horse over the road at a swift pace; or, rather, he allowed his horse to pace as he pleased, and as the pacing was homeward, it was willingly energetic. He gave up the horse in Cherry

street, and struck thence on foot down into South street. It was now late in the evening, and very dark. Gas-lights in the by-ways of the great city were not then plenty. Horace had stepped from the sidewalk into the street to allow the passage of a noisy crew of drunken men, and as they stopped in a wrangle at that point, he crossed over upon the side of the docks. He was picking his way along upon a narrow and dilapidated plank walk when a smothered cry for help attracted his attention. He stopped and listened, and made sure that a fellow-creature was calling for aid in a narrow pass between a boat-house and a fish-house.

"Help! help! Don't, for Heaven's sake, kill me!" were the words which the young man heard distinctly.

It was not in his nature to think of danger to himself with such a cry sounding in his ears. Turning into the narrow passage with a bound, he quickly came to an open space beneath the wooden awning of an empty fish-stall, where he saw three men, and the faint gleaming of an oil dock-lamp near at hand enabled him to take in the situation at a glance. Two of the men had a third beneath them, and they were either killing him, or robbing him, or both. Horace did not stop for closer examination. With a cry of wrath he smote the head of the man nearest to him with his foot, and the second he struck under the left ear with his clenched fist. The first man had started to his feet, with a knife in his hand, when Horace leveled him again. His soul was in arms, and he had the two villains at a disadvantage. He knocked them back several times, all the while calling for help. And help finally came, not from officers of the law, but from three men who came clambering up from a boat that had just put into the dock. They were three sailors, and with their assistance the two

ruffians were secured, after which Horace assisted the third man to his feet.

"Are you hurt, my man?" our hero asked.

The man shook himself, and pressed his hand upon his brow, and finally, like one just assured of sense and life, he answered:

"I don't think they've hurt me; but they'd have done for me precious quick if you hadn't come up. You have saved my life, mate, and I hope I may some time do you a good turn."

"But what will you do now? What was the occasion of this quarrel?"

"It wasn't a quarrel, mate. We've been at the sweat-cloth to-night, and I won them coves' money, and they concluded they wanted it back again. If they'd been sober they wouldn't 'ave done that thing."

Thereupon Horace turned to the two men, whom the boatmen had still in charge, and asked what they had to say.

"It's just as that man says, sir. If you'll let us go, we won't trouble him again for this bout. But he mustn't throw loaded dice against us again. It's lucky you come up as you did. I've got a sore head from your fist, but I'd rather have that than have blood on my hands."

After consultation with the boatmen Horace arranged that he would lead the attacked man away, and that they should detain the other two for a few minutes at least. The rescued man went quickly with the youth, and as he was lame, and felt the smart of a cut on his shoulder, it was thought advisable that they should seek some place where necessary assistance could be had. "If you'll go with me," said the sufferer, "I know just the place close by."

"I will stick by you, my friend, until I see you safe,"

said Horace, cheerfully. "I won't leave my work half done."

"You're a good man, whoever you be," ejaculated the waif, prefacing the remark with a strong oath; "and you've taken all this trouble for a mighty poor stick."

"Don't you think your life was in danger when I came to your relief?"

"In danger? Why bless you! I hadn't got any life just then. They'd got me down, and one of 'em had his knife up. I tell you, mate, my life is yours."

"Then, my brother," said Horace, solemnly, "let me direct it into better paths henceforth."

"Ah! it's hard to learn an old dog new tricks."

"Not if his heart is in the right place."

"Eh?"

"You have a heart, my brother, and I believe there is an immense amount of good in it. It is only a question of which you will use—the good or the bad."

"Ah, if I could only wipe out— But here's our haven. If you'll take me in here I'll be cared for."

They had come in front of a public house, and over the entrance Horace saw an illuminated sign of "THE FOUL ANCHOR."

"Let's go around by the back way, mate. There's two holes here, and they're handy sometimes. I'll show you."

The man turned aside from the main entrance, and found a low, narrow archway, at the far end of which his hand found a bell-pull which was hidden from sight. In answer to the summons, a door in the flat wall was partially opened, and a voice asked who was there. The waif put his lips close and whispered something in reply, whereupon the door was opened wide, and the two were permitted to enter.

"How now, Matt?" asked the Cerberus of the place, when they had reached a small apartment in which a hanging lamp was burning.

"All right, my boy. I'm in funds, but have been caught in the Swifts. This gentleman set me free, and I want to see him alone, if it's all the same to you."

"Certainly. If you want anything, you can call. We are busy in front."

And the din, like the din of a bedlam, which came from apartments not far distant, plainly indicated that somebody must have been very busy.

"You may bring me a bottle of brandy, Jo, the best."

The brandy was brought, and when the waif had seen the door finally closed behind Cerberus, he turned to offer the bottle first to his companion. As he did so, he caught the first fair look at the handsome young face. With a deep gasp he set the bottle upon his knee, and took another look.

"*Are you* HORACE MOORE?" he asked, in a whisper.

"I am," answered the youth, in surprise. "Do you know me?"

"You don't know me?"

Horace looked, and saw a man of powerful frame, with a broad, pock-marked face, a full, sandy beard, broad-shouldered and deep-chested, and evidently not far from five-and-thirty years of age.

"I don't know you," he said, "but I think I have seen you before."

"Where?"

"At the boat-landing of Oxington."

"Very likely. I often go up the river. You can understand what should call me up that way."

"How should I?"

"If I must own the truth, I should say—cards. I have lived in that way. But, I saw you. Yes, very

likely at the same time. Your face is not one to forget. But suppose we look at this cut on my shoulder? Will you try a drop of the brandy? I know it is the pure article."

Horace was wet and cold, and had been subjected to considerable strain of nerve, and he did not refuse a small quantity of the brandy. The waif helped himself more liberally, after which the wounds were looked to; but they were found to be very slight—nothing requiring more than bathing and simple swathing.

"And now," said Horace, as he arose to depart, "if you wish to report to me on the morrow, you will find me on board the ship *Speedwell*."

"Do you belong to her?"

"I am her second officer."

"All right. Thank you."

"And now, may I know your name, my friend?"

"Yes," said the man, after a little hesitation, "you may know it, but I'd ask you as a favor not to use it, leastways, not at present. My name is MATT BUNGO. Did you ever hear it before?"

"The name is not entirely strange to me," answered Horace, reflecting, "yet I cannot tell how nor where I have heard it."

"Never mind. You may have seen it in the sporting reports, and you may have seen it in the police reports. You say you are going to sea in the *Speedwell*?"

"Yes."

"Well, mate, I'll see you before you sail, if it's only to let you know that I am alive and well. I can't thank you to-night for what you've done. My mind isn't quite clear."

"All right, Matt. Just take care of the life, and make it of some use in the world, and I shall be amply rewarded. Will you show me the way out?"

Matt Bungo piloted the young man to the street, and there bade him good-night. He had turned and regained the door which he had left ajar in the flat wall, when he heard a quick step behind him. He looked back, and saw what looked like a female garb.

"Who are you?" he asked.

"Ha! is it you, Matt?"

"Molly?"

"Molly Dowd, the same."

"Come in, if you will."

The woman followed him into the little parlor. She was not an ill-looking woman, when she came into the light; but she was outcast and a sufferer.

"What is that in the bottle, Matt?"

"Brandy—and good."

"May I have some?"

"Yes, Molly."

The woman drank, and then the man asked:

"Have you got any money, Molly?"

"A few shillings, Matt. I earned a dollar this morning."

"How?"

"Hunting up Sugg."

"Eh? What is Sugg up to now? Who wanted him?"

"Lyon Hargrave wanted him."

"For what?"

"I don't know. I only know that Lyon came down in the night boat, and his first and only business seemed to be with Sugg Witkill. And—D'ye mind my taking just another drop?"

"No, Molly, take what you want."

"This is the only water that can put out the fire, Matt."

"Or, Molly, is it a fire so much more fierce that it makes you forget the other?"

"No! no! ten thousand times no! This is heaven, Matt, compared with the old fire. I'm a fool! But let it pass. It's my opinion, Matt, that Sugg has got a big job; and I think he's got big pay. He told me this afternoon, that he'd do the handsome thing for me before he went away."

"Is he going away?"

"Yes. He has shipped for a voyage to India."

"Eh? To India? Is it on board the *Speedwell*?"

"Yes."

Matt Bungo shut his mouth, and shut his hands. Then he laughed a low laugh, and said:

"Come, Molly, let us drink to his success on the voyage."

The woman drank readily.

"So Sugg has shipped?"

"Yes."

"On board the *Speedwell*?"

"Yes."

"Do you imagine that Lyon Hargrave had anything to do with his shipping?"

"Of course I imagine so. There's been something done that must be covered up, and Sugg's got to get out of the way to do it."

"Molly, you are smart."

"I am smart enough to see that."

"But you can't see that I may have to get out of the way, too?"

"You, Matt?"

"Yes. I've had trouble this very night, came near having my heart pricked. Yes, Molly, I may be off as well as Sugg. But, girl, let it be a secret between you and me. Here, I haven't much to spare, but I'll divy

with you. Here are twenty dollars. They'll help you a little."

"Matt!"

"It's all right, girl; only I want you to promise me one thing: You won't breathe to a human being that you have met me here to-night?"

"I promise, Matt."

"And you will never whisper that you have mentioned Sugg's name to me in any way or shape?"

"I promise, solemnly."

"All right, Molly. Now go before you are found here with me. You can go out and come in by the front way. Will you do it?"

"But this money, Matt? I do not want so much."

"Keep it, Molly, and may you get good from it. Now go."

"I shall see you again, Matt?"

"Yes; but remember, let us meet when or where we will, the meeting of this night is as though it had never been."

"It shall be so."

"That is enough. Now go."

The woman drank more of the brandy, and then went out, and when she had had time to get well away, Bungo pulled the soiled and frayed bell-cord that hung in a corner of the room. Cerberus answered the summons.

"Well, Jo, I've got through with my friend, and I think I'll slip around to my old quarters and take a nap. I've had a bit of a shaking up to-night."

"I thought you looked rather tumbled when you came in."

"So I was; but I am all right now. What's the bill?"

Jo lifted the bottle and nodded significantly.

"If there's a drop left you may drink it."

Jo finished the bottle, after which Matt paid the reckoning and departed.

In the open street Matt Bungo stopped and looked up at the stars. Then he walked down to one of the slips, and out upon a pier where a heavy ship lay moored. As he stood where the light of a gas-jet gleamed upon him, there was revealed a new look in his face. It was not much in form—not a great change in outward look—but it had brought a new spirit to the surface. Was it the light of the better life of which he who had that night saved it had spoken?



CHAPTER V.

A SHADOW ON SHIPBOARD.

On the morning following the events last recorded, Horace Moore assumed command of the ship as the superior officer present, and he was not long in showing to both sailors and stevedores that he understood his business. Educated in the service of the British East India Company, he had mastered the science of stowing a cargo in its minutest details, and with a passionate love of the sea, he had taken kindly and naturally to seamanship. Towards the middle of the forenoon, while engaged in taking on board a lot of agricultural implements, the young officer felt a touch upon the shoulder, and, on turning, he beheld Matt Bungo, but not exactly the Matt Bungo of the previous night. This man was cleanly washed and shaved; was dressed in a neat and tidy seaman's garb; and the light of his blue eyes really invited confidence. He looked rough and hard, but of true metal.

"When you are at leisure, sir, I would like to speak with you."

"I will be at leisure in a very short time. Let me see this invoice clear."

In a little while, Mr. Moore turned over the work to a subordinate, and then signified to his visitor that he might follow him; and he led the way to the cabin.

"Well, my good man," said Horace, as soon as they were seated, "I am glad to see you looking so well to-day."

"And I am glad to be feeling well," said Matt. "All of which I owe to you."

"And all of which," added the youth, with a smile, "gives me as much real satisfaction as it does you."

Matt moved uneasily in his seat.

"Can I be of further service?" Horace asked, observing that his visitor was at a loss for words.

"Yes, sir, you can," said Matt, bluntly. "I want to go to sea with you, in this ship."

"Honestly, my man?"

"I never was more honest, nor more earnest. I can hand, reef, and steer, sir; and I think I can do my duty."

"Really, and truly, Matt, if you are in earnest, I don't know but that I would be willing to ship you upon my own responsibility."

"I am in earnest, sir. I want to go to sea. I want to get away from New York. It will be better for me to go away. And then, sir, if I may venture—"

"Go on."

"Who knows what may turn up in a long voyage?" The man's face glowed with earnest feeling, and his hearer knew that the words came from deep down in the heart. "Who knows," he went on, "what of danger may be upon the great deep? There's danger of storm and tempest, and there's danger from many a hidden place. I want to earn an honest living, sir, and I want to go to sea to do it. By going with you I may have the power to repay you something that I never could repay otherways. You are an officer, you are young and hopeful. I will be your true friend. Let what will come, let it come high or low, while Matt

Bungo is on board your ship, you will have one true and devoted friend. Will you take me?"

Two great tears rolled down the young man's cheeks, as he put forth his hand and answered:

"Yes, my true heart, you shall go with me, if you will!"

"Thank you. Bless you, sir!"

A brief silence, and then Matt said:

"Now look ye, Mr. Moore, it isn't well that a secret bond of friendship should ever be known on board a ship between an officer and a foremast hand. So I would like it if you would never speak of what happened last night. I haven't told of it. Have you?"

"Not yet, Matt. I have had no opportunity."

"Then suppose we agree, now and here, to keep it to ourselves. And don't you never show to me any favoritism. Don't, by a look, show that there is any bond between us."

"But, my dear fellow, why are you so anxious in this respect?"

"I'll tell you why I am anxious, Mr. Moore. Some of the crew of this ship will know me, and those men may think worse of me than I am, and if they should get the fancy that I was working on the soft side of an officer, don't you see how they might turn it? Let us keep our hearts to ourselves, leastwise what belongs alone to you and me, and we won't refer to this again unless the time should come when Matt Bungo can pay some of his debt. Now let us have the papers, and I'll be a shipped man, and report for duty to-night, and swing my hammock. What say you?"

The young mate was strangely affected by Matt's manner, but he felt not a shadow of hesitation in trusting him, nor did he hesitate to humor the man in his seemingly whimsical request. The papers were produced,

and with Horace Moore as the only witness Matt Bungo was shipped for the voyage to India and back.

"Shall I write down the full name—*Matthew*?" asked the mate, as he held his pen suspended over the paper.

"I never knew such a name," said the man with a grim smile. "I guess *Matt* is all I'm entitled to. At any rate, it's all I ever answered to, and we won't make a change at this late day."

So he was shipped as simple Matt Bungo, and was allowed to proceed to the forecastle, and select a bunk, or, if he preferred, put his name upon hooks for a hammock. He chose the chance for a hammock, and said he should swing in it that night and be ready for work in the morning. And then he went away.

And Horace Moore, when the work had been done, felt that he had done a good thing. Beyond his power of analysis he felt that good, and only good, could come of his association with Matt Bungo. He did not care to question more particularly. For the most blessed faith man cannot always give a coldly calm and philosophical reason.

On that Friday evening, Matt came down with his hammock and chest, and on the following morning he went to work. On Saturday afternoon, Captain Percy returned, and when he had heard his mate's report of proceedings, and had seen the condition of the ship, below and aloft, he nodded approvingly.

"Mr. Moore," he said, extending his hand, "I think you and I will work together without chafing."

"Thank you, sir." Horace accepted the hearty word, knowing well that it held a volume of meaning.

"I see one or two new men," said Captain Percy.

"Yes," responded the mate. "I have shipped three. Two were sent down from the office, and one I have

taken upon my own responsibility. Here is my man, sir. Matt Bungo, this is Captain Percy."

The new man touched his hat respectfully, and then stood erect, without a falter or a quiver.

John Percy looked him over, from head to foot, and then settled a steady, searching look upon his face.

"Matt Bungo," said he, "your name is not unfamiliar to me. I have heard bad things of you. But I like your face. I am not afraid to trust you."

"May I take your hand, Captain?"

"There you have it, my man."

"And there's mine, sir, for the voyage. I'll try to keep your friendship to the end."

"Good! I like that. As I said before, your face gives me confidence."

"How in the world did you come to pick that man up?" asked the captain, as he and his mate walked aft together.

"What do you know of him?" questioned Moore in return.

"I really know nothing, save what I have heard of him as a reckless and audacious adventurer, by land and by sea, and as a hard, tough customer generally."

"By and by," said Horace, "when we are alone, I will tell you the story."

And in the evening, in the cabin, our hero told the captain the story of his night's adventure, and of the subsequent action of Bungo.

"I have told you this, Captain, because you have a right to know it, but I could wish that you would join with me in respecting the man's desire for secrecy outside. I know not why it is, but really, I have strong faith in the fellow. I do not believe we shall find trust in him misplaced."

"I agree with you, Moore, and I agree to let the story rest where it is."

On the following Monday morning Sugg Witkill came on board, and one of the first things to particularly attract his attention was the face of Matt Bungo.

"Matt," said he, with unfeigned surprise, when he had drawn his old companion out of the way forward, "are you shipped here?"

"Yes, Sugg. And I'd like to ask you the same question. Are you booked for the voyage?"

"I am. But, Matt, what's up? What put this into your head?"

"Very likely the same that put it into yours. New York's getting too hot to hold me. I've had a brush, old fellow, a little the narrowest squeak I ever had."

"I haven't heard of it."

"For the good reason that it hasn't got wind yet. Thank fortune, I've kept close. It wasn't my fault—not a bit. Two green ones were fools enough to buck against me. I cleaned 'em out, and then they tried to clean *me* out on the dock. I'll tell you about it some time, when we are clear of the shore. And now, Sugg, what in the world sent you this way? I should as soon have expected to meet my old Aunt Isaac's ghost here."

"Why," returned Witkill, not entirely at his ease, "the fact is, I wanted a change of air." He brightened as he added: "I thought I'd find it healthier for awhile, a little further away from the Tombs."

"All right. *Mum's* the word. You keep my counsel, and I'll keep yours."

If Sugg Witkill had been inclined at first to suspect any ulterior motive on Matt's part, he found nothing to sustain it; and it was evident from the change in his manner, that he felt it for his interest to keep up the

old friendship, the very feeling which Matt desired should actuate him. Still he did not appear entirely at ease. Something was on his mind which he wanted cleared off. Twice he started to ask a question and backed down on both occasions. Matt had the vantage ground, and could afford to wait. He saw the sign of trouble, and suspected the cause.

“Poor dog!” the latter said to himself, as he walked away, “he wonders if Hargrave has two strings to his bow. He wonders if I am sent on the same errand with himself; and he don’t know how to approach me without letting out his secret.”

And thereupon Matt Bungo shook himself, and expanded his lungs, and felt how grand a thing it was to have a clear conscience. In fact, this feeling was a weighty one; and with Matt it was somewhat new and strange. And he enjoyed it. Everything around him seemed to take bright and healthful color therefrom, and even the very air he breathed was more pure and invigorating. So clear was his perception in this direction that he was enabled to speak to himself his thoughts:

“Bless me!” he soliloquized, as he stood by the rail and looked off over the living waters, “how much better a man feels with good resolutions in his bosom; and how grand it is to have the faith that the good resolutions shall be kept! Ah, Horace Moore, you did a good thing for me when you saved me from that knife; and if you did not do a good thing for yourself, then I am wild in my calculations.”

It was evening when Sugg Witkill approached Matt again, and this time he spoke freely, but yet there was sign of effort enough to denote that he had resolved to ease his mind.

"By the way, Matt, have you seen Lyon Hargrave lately?"

"No."

"Have you heard from him?"

"Not a word. Have you?"

"No."

"Do you know, Sugg, if I had not got this chance, I should have been tempted, in case of trouble, to come down on him for help. He has come into a fat thing. But it is as well as it is. If I get clear of New York, he is welcome to all I've done for him."

"So say I," responded Witkill, in a tone of relief. "But say, Matt, have you noticed who our second mate is?"

"Of course I have. I knew him the moment I saw him. And I tell you, Sugg, I rather like him. It's a lucky thing that he don't know us."

"Very lucky. And, as you said, Matt, I like the fellow myself."

Sugg Witkill walked away whistling, and Matt Bungo nodded mysteriously as he watched the slouching retreat.

On Tuesday morning the crew of the *Speedwell* was all on board, and she had been hauled out into the stream, and a couple of tug-boats engaged to take her down through the Narrows.

The first mate, Charles Huxton, had assumed command of his watch. He was a man of forty, or thereabouts; a native of Salem, Mass.; stocky and strong; with thick, sandy hair, and complexion to match. In some respects he might be called a tiger, but he was a grand, good tiger to all who cheerfully and manfully did their duty.

The third mate was named William Lander, a man of eight-and-seventy, and a good seaman. If he was

ever to be estopped from official advancement, it would be from intellectual lack.

As supercargo went out George Dwinal, a son of the owner, and a true-hearted gentleman.

Of men before the mast there were thirty, including the boatswain, sailmaker, and carpenter. The three latter officers had been rated for extra pay, but were to be allowed no extra privileges unless one of them should be found competent to act in the capacity of fourth mate.

It was a fair looking crew as crews of the time averaged ; but seamen were scarce, and men had been shipped who would not have been taken could better men have been found.

"Mr. Moore, what do you think of this crew?" asked Huxton, as the two stood by the wheel.

"I think we'll have to commence straight with them," was Horace's answer. "There are a few bad-looking men."

"I believe you."

"Still," added the second mate, "I am not inclined to borrow trouble. It is well for the officers of a ship that the best interest of the men is to faithfully perform their duties."

"You are right, sir."

When the watches were called off both Witkill and Bungo were put in the starboard watch, which was the watch of the captain and the second mate. Horace had planned that Matt Bungo should go in his watch, and the other had come in by accident of rotation.

At length the *Speedwell* was towed down to the lower bay, and in due time she had taken her departure, and was standing out to sea. The men worked well in unison, and the officers soon proved themselves entirely competent. The slight variations of rigging from the

ships of his former service Horace had particularly noted before sailing, so that he was perfectly at home when the need came.

For two weeks the ship sailed on, and matters moved with comparative smoothness. There was some slight need of discipline, and a few of the men had been reprimanded, and two had been lightly punished. One of these latter was Philip Grover, who had been rated at boatswain; and not many days after, for another glaring offence, his rate was taken from him, and he was sent forward. The berth of boatswain was then offered to Matt Bungo, who had proved himself competent and willing. But he begged that he might be excused.

"Tell the captain," he said, privately, to Moore, "that I'd better not take it now. Perhaps some time I may. He may have the duty from me all the same."

So no appointment was made in place of the deposed boatswain.

By this time, the expiration of three weeks, Horace Moore had become strangely impressed with a sinister look in the face of a man called Sugg Witkill. At best the face of the man was evil, but the young officer had more than once found the evil gaze fixed upon him in a way that caused him to shrink and shudder—to shrink and shudder while the baleful influence was upon him, and then to feel indignation and disgust. One night, while on the mid-watch, while Witkill was in the fore-top, and Bungo was alone at the wheel, he found opportunity to speak safely with the latter.

"Matt," he said, "you seem to know Sugg Witkill?"

The helmsman came near letting the ship come into the wind in the perturbation caused by the question. But he regained his point of compass, and also regained his composure.

"Mr. Moore, have you noticed anything?"

"Yes, Matt, I have noticed much."

"Sugg's in the top, isn't he?"

"Yes."

"Let Stacy relieve me, and I'll join you at the lee mizzen rigging. We'll be under cover of the house there."

Bungo was presently relieved, and shortly afterward he found the mate at the appointed spot.

"Mr. Moore," he said, "I've been expecting for some time that you'd ask me about that man. If I *knew* any thing, I could set you on your guard ; but I only suspect."

"And what do you suspect, Matt?"

"First and foremost, sir, let us be pledged that for the present we will keep our own counsel. I want to know if I am right in my suspicions. What should you think, sir, if you had reason to believe that Sugg Witkill had been hired to ship on board this vessel?"

"Hired?"

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"Suppose you had good evidence that Lyon Hargrave had hired him?"

Horace started as though he had received a sudden and heavy blow.

"Matt ! What do you mean?"

"I mean just what I have said, sir. You remember the night that you left me at the 'Foul Anchor?'"

"Yes."

"Well, sir, on that night, you may have observed that a woman came into the archway as you went out?"

"Yes, I met her."

"That woman, sir, told me that Sugg had shipped on board the *Speedwell* ; and she further told me that Lyon Hargrave had been that morning in close confab with

Sugg ; and Sugg had told her that he had made a good thing. I had known Sugg Witkill for years ; and I am sorry to confess that I had known a worse man in Lyon Hargrave. It was then, sir, that I resolved to ship."

Horace reached out and took the sailor's hard hand.

"In Heaven's name, Matt, do you think Lyon Hargrave could set a hound upon my track to take my life?"

"I do really think he could do just that thing."

"But for what?"

"I'll give you one reason, sir, and there may be more. You know there was a will missed?"

"Yes."

"But it may not be destroyed."

"Matt Bungo ! What do you know of that will?"

"Only what I've picked up, sir. I suspect, though, that even Lyon Hargrave never saw it. If he knew it was destroyed, he wouldn't care for you. But I can't tell you of the will now. There's something about that matter as far beyond my comprehension as heaven is beyond the earth. The future must tell us that. For the present we have only to look at Sugg Witkill. I've had my eyes upon him, sir. I believe he means you harm, I believe he is the hired agent of Lyon Hargrave to that end, but I do not think he means to move until we reach some foreign port. But we can watch him. He is not so cunning as I thought him, or he would not have so soon exposed himself. However, sir, my presence on board has hurt him. I doubt if he is quite satisfied as yet that I am still his friend. He don't treat me so, at all events."

Horace Moore was so overwhelmed with surprise that for a time his tongue could not find speech, and after a brief pause Matt resumed :

"Now look ye, Mr. Moore, I have told you all this

because I couldn't help it. You asked me, and I couldn't find the heart to keep the secret longer. But you and I must keep it between ourselves until we *know positively*. Above all things, if you would ever unmask Lyon Hargrave, Sugg Witkill must not see a sign of suspicion, in either you or me. Don't you feel it so?"

"Yes, Matt."

"And will you keep this whole thing to yourself, only as you may speak with me as you have opportunity?"

"Yes, I can promise that," replied the youth, quickly and emphatically. "Since I can relieve my mind upon occasion to you I ask no more. But you will inform me if you see anything new?"

"I will tell you everything, sir. We will work together. Keep a sharp lookout upon Witkill, and I will do the same. When we reach port I will set a trap for him. If it is as I suspect, I shall catch him, never fear."

Shortly after this the two separated, Bungo returning to the wheel, while the mate resumed his walk upon the weather side of the quarter deck.

And as Horace Moore thought of Lyon Hargrave he began to estimate the possible villainy of the man's character. Touching the will he cared only in one direction—the direction of Lily Merton. With present thought of her came another thought: Could the villain have it in contemplation to— But he ground his heel upon the deck, with the thought beneath it. He would not, if he could help it, give such a thought even form in his mind.



CHAPTER VI.

THE VERGE OF A GREAT DANGER.

For a time, Horace Moore found it difficult to hold his thoughts down to the work of a calm analysis of the subject matter comprehended in the scope of the suspicions which had presented themselves, or which had been presented by Matt Bungo ; but he came to it, at length ; and as reason began to work clearly, he found possible solutions not difficult. On the day following his interview with Matt, Sugg Witkill had the wheel from ten o'clock until meridian. While he stood there, Horace went to the binnacle, and presently spoke of the ship's course, at the same time looking the man straight in the eye. Witkill could not answer the look. His eyes fell, and he pretended to be watching the card of the compass, which pretence was bungling and abortive. The mate stood there until he saw drops of perspiration starting out upon the man's brow and temples, and then, with a commonplace remark concerning the wind and the course, he turned back to the taffrail. And he said to himself when he was alone :

"Of all the men in this ship that man alone cannot look me in the eye. Other men are as wicked as he, but they do not wince when I look at them. It is the evil

in his heart which has me for its object that produces this result. The thing is as plain as the shadow of the sun. Matt is right. That man means me ill."

And beyond this his thoughts ran something after this fashion :

"I certainly have every reason to believe that Walter Hargrave made a will in my favor, prompted thereto by his own love and good will. Edith Somerby is sure the will was destroyed by Lyon's connivance. It may be that the will is still in existence, or, that proofs of its destruction are wanting. If such is the case, Lyon Hargrave sees in me a possible barrier to his coveted fortune. O! if I could only see through the mystery! But I can suspect this villainous-looking emissary—and I do suspect him. Time may reveal it. God help me!"

Time passed on. The ship had crossed the equator, and was approaching the southern tropic. One afternoon Captain Percy observed signs to the southward which did not look to him fair.

"I should hardly look for a squall in this place, and at this time," he said, to his first mate, "but that certainly looks like it."

"I have known squalls here, sir," returned Huxton; "and when they come they are apt to be short and sweet. I think I should prepare for it."

All hands were called, but all hands did not at once make their appearance. The watch below remained in the fore-castle, and Mr. Huxton leaped down with a rope's end in his hand. He came upon the conclave there assembled unexpectedly, and heard words spoken that staggered him.

"How!" he cried, with an oath. "Have you got a game of that kind on foot? On deck to shorten sail, and after that we will look into this. Look to yourself, Phil, Grover! Let me see a wink out of the way, and

I'll send a bullet through your brain ! On deck ! and I'll call you aft when this other danger is provided for."

The men went on deck, though more than one of them gave signs that he would have throttled the mate had he dared ; but Charles Huxton was not a man to be openly assaulted, especially when he was armed and forewarned.

It was near sundown, and white caps of foam could be seen in the distance. The ship was put with her stern in that direction, and her sail stripped off as fast as possible. The lofty sails had been taken in, the top-sail yards lowered, and the sails clewed up, and the courses were being taken in, when the squall struck. It was a terrific shock, and beneath the mighty stroke the ship almost went under ; but she struggled up, and by heroic exertion, only one sail was lost. The spanker had not been loosed from its outhaul when the tornado came, and the sail was rent from throat to clew-crinkle, and then blown into ribbons.

Mr. Huxton stood by the starboard brace-bumkin when the squall struck, and through the blinding sheet of spray that was dashed high and far over the ship he saw the wreck of the spanker, and he also saw that the heavy boom was loose.

"Look out for the boom !" he cried. "Jump to the sheets, and secure it amidships. *Crotch the spanker-boom for your lives !*"

They were the last words ever heard from the lips of Charles Huxton. On the next moment was heard the cry :

"A MAN OVERBOARD !"

Which was repeated from poop to forecastle. Captain Percy had stood by the wheel, and had seen his mate by the quarter-rail, and had heard his order for secur-

ing the spanker-boom ; but in the fury of the dashing spray he had not seen plainly.

"Who has gone?" he cried, springing to the rail, and grasping it for support.

"I think it's Mr. Huxton, sir," said Philip Grover, who stood near, with the spanker sheet in his hand.

"*Silence, fore and aft!*" thundered the captain, through his trumpet. "Cut away the life-buoys! Stand by to lower away the boat!"

Beyond this he could not give an immediate order, as the ship was just then completely under water ; but in a very few moments the squall had passed, and the shock was felt no more. It had come and gone almost with the rapidity of lightning, and while the foaming monster howled away to leeward the *Speedwell* was settling down quietly upon the slightly ruffled waters.

And now Captain Percy not only lowered away the boat from the stern-davits, but he got out a cutter, and he divided a sufficient number of his crew, and sent them out upon the search. The passing of the hurricane had not left a dangerous sea, and the boats put off with no fear on the part of their occupants. When his boats had gone, under charge of Mr. Moore, Percy made sail, so bracing the yards that the ship could not drift away from the spot where the officer had been lost.

But all search proved vain. Muskets were discharged ; rockets were sent up ; and as the night shut in buoys were sent adrift, with gleaming lights attached. Four long hours had passed, and the darkness had shut down like a pall. Not a sign of the lost man had been seen, not a sound had been heard. As a last resort, Captain Percy left his ship in charge of his second mate, and went himself forth in the cutter, with bright torches flaming at bow and stern, but it availed not. At midnight, with a heavy, aching heart, Percy

gave the order to fill away. A new spanker had been bent, and, save that one vacant place at the cabin board, the passing tempest had left no trace.

"Horace," said John Percy, taking our hero's hand, and addressing him as he might have addressed a brother, "I must put the ship in your hands for the next watch. You and I are no longer on the same list. You are henceforth First Mate of the *Speedwell*. Go up and set your watch, and if you can come back here, do so. There is a heavy weight on my mind. The larboard watch is now yours. Come back if you find a man you can trust with the deck."

"Captain Percy! Do you suspect foul play in this?"

"Yes, my boy—yes, Mr. Moore. As God lives, Charles Huxton was not accidentally knocked overboard. I saw him but a moment before, and I know that the spanker-boom never reached him. But no more now. Go on deck. The larboard watch is the mid-watch, and I give it to you. See everything as it should be, and then come back. Oh! Charles and I have been mates for years. He was a true man, with a true heart. There is mischief afloat. I will be up when you come down."

Horace Moore went on deck, where he found the ship on her course under charge of Mr. Lander; and he heard murmurings from a few that the watch had not been relieved.

"Easy, my men," he said, pleasantly. "The captain is under a cloud. I will take the larboard watch, and for the present, I must take one man from the other watch to assist me, and then the starboard watch may go below. I would like Sugg Witkill to come into the watch with me. That is the only change that will be necessary."

Sugg Witkill was confounded at this. What to make of it he did not know. Could Horace Moore have really and truly taken such a fancy to him? But, lay the land as it might, he could not accept. He stammered and stuttered, and finally asked that he might be allowed to remain with his old watch-mates.

"I will not urge you against your express desire," said our hero, with a show of earnest good feeling. "I want a good seaman to come with me into the new watch, and I know that you, Witkill, are such. Can you recommend to me a man such as I want?"

Never was a man more completely taken aback than was Sugg Witkill at that moment. The thought that the mate was trifling did not enter his mind.

"Select me a good man from your watch, Witkill, and I will take him," pursued Moore, seeing plainly that the rascal was unsuspecting of the ruse.

Now it so happened that Matt Bungo stood by Witkill's side, and with a nudge he whispered :

"Plague take it, Sugg, I'll go. Tell him so."

And Witkill, as innocently as could be, recommended Matt Bungo to the mate as the man whom he should take.

"Bungo, will you come into the larboard watch with me?" asked Moore.

"Yes, sir, if you wish it."

"He's a good man, sir," said Witkill, beginning to feel more like himself, "and I think you'll like him."

So Matt Bungo was transferred to the larboard watch, and very soon thereafter the starboard watch was allowed to go below.

"Mr. Moore, did you really want Sugg in your watch?" asked Matt.

"Why do you ask?"

"Because you did it so natural-like, and so easy, that I almost took you to be in earnest."

"Well, Matt, I have got now just what I wanted. Matt Bungo was my mark."

"Thank you, sir."

"And now, Matt, I want you to take the deck for a little while. I must go below and speak with the captain."

"I'll keep all safe and trim, sir."

Horace had reached the cabin door when a touch upon the shoulder caused him to stop and turn. It was Matt, who had followed him from the gangway.

"Mr. Moore, you said you were going to see the captain. Do you know what he wants of you?"

"I can guess."

The rough seaman stood for a moment irresolute ; then he laid his hand upon the mate's shoulder, and said :

"Horace Moore, the time has gone by for secrets between you and me. If Captain Percy asks you how Mr. Huxton came to fall overboard, you can tell him he was pushed."

"Matt !"

"It's just as I say, sir."

"Matt Bungo, do you know that Mr. Huxton was purposely knocked overboard?"

"Yes, sir."

"By whom?"

"I couldn't exactly swear to that, sir ; but I can tell you *why* he was sent over so soon. When all hands were called to take in sail, you may remember that the watch below didn't move in a hurry, and that Huxton went into the forecastle to call 'em. He sprang down the ladder at a bound, and was just in time to hear a speech that surprised him. It was a speech of mutiny,

sir ; and he was foolish enough to let himself out. Only for that you wouldn't be standing his watch now."

Horace saw that the man was earnest and sincere, and the situation flashed upon him—flashed upon him with a force that for the moment confounded him. In this light he could now understand many things that had before puzzled him. Mutterings, and whisperings, and mysterious glances and nods, which had been observed for some days back, could under this flash be accounted for. As soon as he could command himself he took the sailor's hand.

"Matt, answer me this. Is Sugg Witkill the leader?"

"No, sir, not the leader ; but he comes next to it."

"Is it Philip Grover?"

Matt hesitated. He cast his eyes quickly around to be sure he was not overheard by another, and then whispered :

"Leave it in my hands for the present, sir. It'll soon come to a head, and I shall know the whole thing. I am trusted, sir. I had never thought till this trial came, that a bad name could bless anybody ; but my bad name has proved a blessing to me in this. Because I have been a bad man these bad men trust me, and they really believe that I am with them heart and hand. Sugg Witkill doesn't suspect me of a single white feather. He thinks I am black all through. There is mutiny, sir, and as soon as the plans are laid you shall know them. You may trust me. Only, sir, be very careful that you don't expose yourself. And don't let the captain do it either. Don't, by word or look, let a man on board this ship have reason to fancy that you suspect anything out of the way."

"You may trust me for that, Matt ; and I will avouch for Captain Percy. But tell me, how many of the crew are implicated in this?"

"More than you would believe, sir. I shall know all in a day or two, and be sure you shall have the information as soon as it is settled. There—we'd better not talk any more now. There's danger in both watches. Trust to me, sir."

"Bless you, Matt! I trust you fully. Look to the deck while I am gone."

Horace found Captain Percy sitting at the table, with an open chart before him, and having made sure that they were alone, he took a seat on the opposite side.

"With whom have you left the deck, Mr. Moore?"

"With Matt Bungo."

Percy started, and presently reached over and laid his hand upon that of his mate.

"Horace, you must not trust that man."

Our hero did not evince nor affect any surprise. He simply asked :

"Why not trust him?"

"He is a bad man," said Percy, with bitter emphasis. "He is one of the very worst, if I can believe my eyes. Hush!"

The captain arose and went to the door of the bulk-head, and having satisfied himself that no eavesdroppers were near, he resumed his seat.

"Horace Moore, there is mutiny on board the ship!"

The mate did not express any surprise. Calmly returning his commander's look he answered :

"I wish I could not believe it; but the evidence is strong. You spoke, sir, as though you suspected foul play in the loss of Mr. Huxton. Can you tell me what reason you have for such suspicion?"

"I have this reason," returned the chief, with knitted brow and blazing eye. "I saw Charles Huxton standing by the rail. When he gave the order for securing the spanker-boom I was looking at him. Just then a shred

of the streaming spanker snapped in my face, and for the moment blinded me. In a moment more Huxton was gone. No piece of rigging was flying near him. He must have been fairly lifted over the rail."

"Have you any thought who did it, sir?"

"Yes. I think Philip Grover did it. He was the one who gave the alarm."

"Captain Percy, in one direction your suspicion leads you falsely. Matt Bungo is a true friend to both you and me, and we must trust him implicitly in this emergency."

"Horace, what intelligence have you?"

"That which I have gained since I left you last. Listen, sir."

And thereupon the mate told to his chief all he had learned from Bungo.

"Matt associates with them, sir, and they believe him to be one of their best men. Grover is evidently at the head of the mutiny, and Witkill comes next. How many are pledged I do not know, but I know that we shall have ugly men to deal with."

Captain Percy was no coward, but his cheek blanched and his lip quivered as he listened to his mate's story. He knew very well that his crew was composed of men in whom the dangerous element predominated. In fact, when he came to reflect upon the matter, and call the men to mind, one by one, he knew not any whom he could fully trust. There were many who could never have headed a murderous mutiny, but he could think of only one or two who would be likely to stand out free and clear from the mutinous influence.

"I acknowledge," he said, "that I have misjudged Matt Bungo. We will trust him. When we know the villains' plans we can take measures to thwart them. It is very likely known by them that we have a large sum

of money on board, and they also know that most of our cargo could be readily sold or bartered at any African port. They intend, most likely, to rise before we reach Cape Town."

"That will not give them a long time, sir."

"About seven days."

"I believe, Captain, that we shall circumvent them."

"If we can know their plans beforehand."

"I'll stake my life upon Matt Bungo's truth. When he knows, we shall know; and in the meantime let you and me keep our own secret. We can work better so."

"You are right, Horace. We will not let even our suspicions be known. Do you keep your countenance, and I will keep mine. And let us not borrow unnecessary trouble. I know we have a dangerous crew, but, forewarned, we will be a match for them. And now let us close this conference. You must not be too long absent from the deck."

After a further word of caution Horace returned to his post, but did not seek Matt.

On the following day the crew was mustered upon the quarter-deck, when Horace Moore was announced as first mate; William Lander to be second mate; and Tom Martin to be third mate—to be respected and obeyed accordingly.

The night of that day shut in dark and sultry, and when, at eight o'clock, Percy and Moore came to compare notes, they had discovered much. They had seen signs which were not to be mistaken.

"Moore," said the captain, holding his mate's hand as he spoke, "this mutiny is thoroughly cut and dried, and I tell you nearly every man is implicated. Have an eye about you, sir. I shall not sleep to-night. You will see Bungo on deck?"

"Yes, and there goes eight bells. I will look sharp, sir."

It was Moore's watch from eight until midnight. He had seen the men at their stations, and was standing by the binnacle, when a piece of rope yarn struck his face. He looked around and saw by the mizzen rigging a man, who seemed to be beckoning to him.

"Ah, is it you, Matt?"

"Yes, sir. Hush! Come aft to the taffrail. We mustn't be seen."

The man spoke breathlessly, as though under strong excitement, and the mate felt his own heart throb painfully as he led the way to a spot where he might meet his strange friend in safety.



CHAPTER VII.

THE MATE'S STRATAGEM.

"Now, Matt, what is it?"

"Hush! Let us be sure we are not observed."

"You may speak freely, Matt, but softly."

"Then, sir," said the seaman, in a breathless, painfully constrained voice, "the mutineers have planned to rise this very night! It is to be done—the blow is to struck—when the mid-watch is called. All hands will then be on deck, and at a signal from Grover his party will spring together at the mainmast, and every man will be armed. Full three-quarters of the crew are in the compact. Of course their next movement will be simple. They anticipate little effective opposition."

"Phil. Grover is the recognized leader, is he?"

"Yes, sir."

"Who is next?"

"Sugg Witkill."

Horace Moore was thoroughly alarmed, but not unduly excited. In his alarm there was no weakness. He reflected a few moments, and then asked:

"Can you tell me how many of the crew are engaged with eager, willing spirit in this work—that is, how many would be willing to be recognized as leaders?"

"Not more than eight, sir?"

"Can you give me their names?"

"I think I can, sir. You'll find them on this bit of paper, put down just as I think they stand. They've got me third on their list, and I am to take the wheel the moment the signal is given, and if I find a man there not of us, I am to knock him on the head."

"And the officers—what do they plan to do with us?"

"You should know, sir. Look at the characters of the mutineers. Surely they would think of but one thing to do with you."

"They would murder us?"

"Yes, sir."

"And what then? What do they plan to do with the ship?"

"That is not fully determined, sir. All agree that they will run to the northward; and it is also agreed that the cargo shall be disposed of on the coast. Grover and Witkill are in favor of making direct for the slave coast, and there trading off the cargo for slaves, keeping the money which they know is on board. They will then repaint and disguise the ship, and make sail for Cuba."

The mate laid his hands upon the taffrail, and leaned his head upon them, and thus he remained for a full minute. When he looked up, Bungo said:

"It is just exactly as I have told you, sir; and now you may put me to any work you choose, and I will do my best. But, sir, it will be a hard pull. Numbers are greatly against us. In fact, I don't know of more than ten men, all told—and that includes every officer—who could be depended upon—and two or three of those will be invited to join the mutineers when the time comes."

"How is Tom Martin?"

"He is true blue, sir. He is marked out to be shot down with you and the captain. And now, Mr. Moore, can you think of some way of working to windward of the

villains? It must be done, or all is lost. If you let eight bells strike again on board this ship without running those rascals unexpectedly by the board, you'll never see the rising of another sun."

"Where is Grover?" asked the mate, after a pause.

"He is forward, sir, in charge of the fore-castle."

Another pause, and then Moore said :

"I must go into the cabin and see the captain. Will you be at hand when I return?"

"I will, sir."

"Have you pistols, Matt?"

"I have one."

"I will bring you more. Keep your eyes and ears open while I am gone."

"Never fear, sir."

Two bells (nine o'clock) were struck as the mate left the deck. He entered the cabin, and found the captain and supercargo, Dwinal, sitting at the table, the former with a chart open before him. Lander was asleep in his stateroom. The moment Percy looked up and caught the expression upon the face of his first officer, he knew there was calamity at hand. Moore stepped very lightly across the floor, and when he reached the table he sat down. Both the captain and the supercargo looked at him anxiously, waiting for him to speak. Dwinal had been warned of the approaching danger, so he was not to be taken entirely by surprise.

"Captain Percy," said the mate, in a whisper, "the hour is at hand! This very night, at the calling of the mid-watch, the mutineers have planned to strike."

"Stop," interposed Percy. "Let us have Lander here. He has a strong arm and a true heart, even though his wit is not brilliant."

The second mate was called, and when he had taken

his seat at the board Mr. Moore gave in detail the information he had received from Bungo.

Those who have spent long months on shipboard, with only the trackless ocean for a surrounding, may be able to understand something of the situation of the officers of the *Speedwell* in this dire emergency. Mutiny at sea is a very different thing from mutiny on land. Let the danger be never so appalling, and the odds never so great, there can be no backing away—no flight from the impending blow. The walls of the most massive prison are not so impassable as are those walls of endless waters that shut in the victims of a ship's mutiny. Those were brave men who sat at the cabin table, but we cannot wonder that their cheeks blanched for the moment under the weight of Moore's revelation. Captain Percy was the first to break the silence.

"Let me see the paper which Bungo gave you."

Mr. Moore passed over the paper—a scrap from the blank leaf of an old book—on which eight names had been written with a pencil. The captain examined it critically, giving particular attention to each name.

"Phil. Grover and Sugg Witkill," he finally said, "are known to us. Grover has been restive and malevolent from the first, and Witkill is a villain double-dyed. And Piper, the carpenter, is a bold, bad man. I do not think he would have had the brain to plan a mutiny, but he can make a fit and effective helper. McFarlain and John Townley are scamps, and have probably helped in the plotting. And Dick Smith might plot upon a pinch. Then we have Black Sam and Basil Giroux, two unadulterated villains, with just brain enough to follow the lead of others. It is a wicked and dangerous combination."

"And I understand that there are sixteen others who

will join the mutineers when the signal is given?" said Dwinal, gaspingly.

"Yes," answered Moore.

"And that leaves only ten of us against twenty-four."

"We cannot absolutely depend upon more than six," said Moore. "We four, with Tom Martin and Matt Bungo, are all we can safely swear by. Life is dear, and should the mutineers gain possession of the deck, I fear those few seamen who have not yet been approached would join them rather than suffer death. At this present moment six of us must seize the threatened danger. What do you think of it, Captain Percy?"

Percy bowed his head upon his hands, and after a time he acknowledged that he knew not what to think.

"At all events," said Lander, doggedly, "we will sell our lives as dearly as possible. We have plenty of fire-arms, and can make a little stand, at least."

"You mean," suggested Horace, "should they attack us?"

"Yes."

"Ah, that must not be. If we allow their signal to be given, all the fire-arms in the ship cannot save us. We must circumvent them. We are forewarned, and let us make good the advantage."

"But how?" asked the captain and the second-mate in a breath.

Without answering, Horace Moore arose and paced several times across the cabin. At length he stopped and stood by the table. His lip quivered, and there was a tremulousness in the hand which he laid upon the captain's shoulder, but there was no fear in the sign. The deep, fiery light that gleamed in his lustrous eyes would have told that.

"Captain Percy," he said, in a whisper, "let us get out the best of our fire-arms and carefully load them.

We want at least a score of heavy pistols, and as many of the smaller ones. Do you do this, and allow me to go on deck. I must not be too long absent. When you have them all prepared, let Mr. Dwinal come and inform me."

"What have you planned?" asked the captain, excitedly.

"My plan is not yet clear. I must go on deck and think. All is, we must contrive some way to knock down a part of the enemy's hamper with a long shot. I have the shadowings of a plan which may work to our advantage if you find nothing better. You will prepare the arms?"

"Yes."

"And let me know when it is done. Ha! there goes three bells! I have been from my post half an hour."

The *Speedwell* had crossed the southern tropic, and had entered upon the latitude of the north-westerly currents of wind, so that she was now standing on her course with the wind abaft the beam.

When Horace Moore reached the deck he found all apparently as he had left it. There was no moon, but the stars were shining, and the night was fair. The breeze was moderate, and the ship was sailing with top-gallant sails set above full topsails. He found Martin, the newly-made mate, at the binnacle, and with a touch upon the shoulder he called him aside to the quarter-rail, where he unfolded to him the situation. Tom had suspected the meeting, but had known nothing of the appointed time. It is not strange that he quivered a little when he had heard.

"What will we do?" he asked.

"Are you prepared to stand by the ship?" rejoined Horace.

"To the last!" was the emphatic answer.

"Then I hope we may do much. Don't leave the quarter-deck again during the watch, but stand by to move as I shall direct."

Martin promised to be faithful and watchful, and after this Horace sought Matt Bungo, with whom he held a brief but comprehensive consultation.

"You remember the names you gave me upon that paper?" said our hero, at the close.

"Yes."

"And if we have occasion to call away the boat, will you do your best to see that those men go in it?"

"I will, sir."

"All right. Stand by, and be steady."

Shortly after this Dwinal came from the cabin, and whispered to Horace that the arms were all prepared, and the mate followed him back, where he told to the captain the plan he had formed.

"Good!" cried Percy, with a new sparkle of the eye. "Well thought of, Horace. By heavens! if you succeed in this, we'll have them foul! We will stand by to appear when all hands are called, and we will have the arms at hand."

Horace Moore returned to the deck, where, for a time, he paced to and fro on the larboard side, the wind being upon that quarter. By and by he called Matt Bungo.

"Matt," said he, as the man appeared, "will you go and find Phil. Grover, and send him aft? Don't let any one else hear the order, if you can possibly avoid it."

"I'll be careful, sir."

Matt went forward as directed, and found Grover sitting upon the forecastle companion-hatch, and finding no one else within earshot, he said:

"Phil., Mr. Moore wants to see you aft."

"What does he want?" inquired Grover, with an oath,

"I think it's about giving you *some sort of a better berth.*"

Another oath, long drawn out and very expressive, and then :

"We'll take the berths for ourselves, Matt, before another sun comes up. But I'll go and see him."

The mutineer found the mate standing by the lee-rail, close by the brace-bumkin.

"Mr. Moore, did you want me?"

"Ah! Grover—yes." And the mate stood aside and motioned for the man to come nearer.

Grover obeyed instinctively, and stood by Horace's side, leaning against the rail.

"The captain and I have been talking the matter over since Huxton was lost, and we have concluded to give you a berth more suited to your merits. Do you think you can appreciate it, and hold on to it?"

"I can tell you better after I know what it is." There was insolence and ill-concealed triumph in the tone.

"*This is it!*"

The mate had cautiously stepped away from the rail, and as he spoke he smote his fist with lightning-like velocity directly between Grover's eyes, and then, in an instant, with one hand upon the villain's throat, and the other under his legs, he threw him overboard. And then Moore started back and shouted, at the top of his voice :

"Man overboard? Man overboard! Call all hands! ALL HANDS!"

Matt Bungo had been ready, and the moment he heard the alarm, he rushed to the forecastle hatch and shouted for dear life.

The ship was quickly brought to the wind, and the courses clewed up, with the main-topsail aback, and by

this time all hands were on deck, and Captain Percy had taken command.

"Who is gone?" came from many of the crew.

"It's Phil. Grover," answered Bungo. "He was out on the lee bumkin, taking a turn out of the main-brace. Come, come, let us who are his friends go in the boat. We'll have him back. He can swim like a fish."

Meanwhile orders had been given for lowering the boat, which was placed in charge of Piper, the carpenter. The sea was not rough, and there was no difficulty in either lowering or manning. Sugg Witkill, eager to save his mate, jumped into the boat with Piper, and overhauled the tackle as she was lowered, and when she had touched water the others of her crew slid down by the falls. Matt Bungo was busy and eager, calling lustily for the friends of the lost man to save him, and thus, as the manning of the boat was left entirely to him, he managed to send down the seven marked men, to go in quest of the eighth. Those in the boat had evidently thought he would go with them; but as there were only six oars, her crew was complete, so she was unhooked, and pulled away.

"To his station, every man!" ordered Captain Percy, as soon as the boat had put off.

And as soon as the crew had dispersed from the taff-rail, where many of them had assembled to watch operations, the arms were brought out from the cabin, and distributed to those for whom they were intended.

Thus armed, and in possession of the after part of the quarter-deck, the little band stood firm. A man not yet implicated in the mutiny was at the wheel, where he was allowed to remain.

"Main-braces!" shouted the captain. "*Stand by to fill away!*"

The men forward were thunder-struck. What did

the captain mean? Was he going to run away from his own boat, manned by his own men, in mid-ocean?

"Let go to windward! Brace up! Quick!"

It was one of those emergencies where the men could not stop to think. They were used only to obeying, not to thinking. Of the pledged mutineers their leaders were gone, so none were present to think effectively in that direction.

The yards of the mainmast were braced to the wind, the lower sails set, and the ship once more put upon her course, before the crew could fairly comprehend what was being done. The men worked like machines moved by a master hand, and not one of them stopped to ask a question of the officers until the order to "belay all" had been given. And even then they had no need to ask, for Capt. Percy ordered all hands to the forward part of the quarter-deck as soon as the braces had been secured. Among the remaining mutinous ones there was no recognized leader—no man who had independently had a thought on the subject. They had been but followers of the leading spirits—spirits no longer present to guide them, and when the order came for them to lay aft to the quarter-deck they obeyed mechanically. Lanterns had been hung upon either side, and by the light thereof the men could see that the officers were armed and firm.

Matt Bungo was not with those at the poop. His pistols were concealed, and he stood with the men at the mainmast, ready to strike in the proper place should there be need, but preferring to retain the confidence and good-will of the crew if he could, as not one of them could have reason for suspecting him of having betrayed the secret of the mutineers.

Captain Percy advanced a pace, with a cocked pistol in each hand.

"My men," he said, with stern solemnity, "your cruel wickedness is known to me. I have known for days that mutiny was brewing in this ship, and I have known your leaders. They exposed themselves. The eight men who are gone from us I shall leave to the mercy of a just God. It would have been both murder and suicide for me to have kept them here. I know that they were your leaders, and I am willing to believe that you who now stand before me were but tools in their hands. Now mark me: Those of you who are ready and willing to return to your duty, and will pledge me your faith for the rest of the voyage, may step aft to the weather side of the quarter-deck; and I promise you that I will forgive you for the past. If there be any among you who are not thus inclined, remain where you are!"

There was a deep and fatal significance in this last sentence. Only five armed men stood before them, but the stricken crew felt themselves completely at their mercy. The men, in their haste, had come upon deck without arms, and if there were any among them who had inclination to resist, they knew not whom of their shipmates they could trust.

Matt Bungo was the first to move. Turning to his comrades, he said:

"It's all up, mates, and I, for one, am glad of it. I'm sorry for Phil. and Sugg, and the rest; but I'd rather have it so than to have the red stain of murder on my hands. I'll do my duty—and when I say that, I mean it, honest."

And he went over upon the weather side of the quarter-deck.

And others followed him in a line—followed until every man had left the old spot by the mainmast, thus declaring that he would be true and dutiful henceforth.

And then Captain Percy sent the off-watch below, and gave the deck up to his mate.

On the following morning Percy observed that not a few of his men were shy and tremulous, and he rightly judged the cause. After breakfast all hands were again mustered upon the quarter-deck.

"My men," said the captain, when they had assembled, "answer me truly. Don't you feel better this morning as you are than you would have felt if you had been permitted to do mutiny and murder?"

The answer was not immediate, but when it came, it was spontaneous, hearty, and unanimous. They were glad to be as they were. And their faces showed it.

"Now, my men," said Percy, with a beaming face, "to your stations, and let us see if we cannot make a prosperous voyage of it."

And from that time all went well. Matt Bungo became chief among the foremast hands, and he kept them in the right way. They did not suspect the double part he had played in the mutiny, but they regarded him as a penitent sinner with themselves, and were willing to be led by him.

Between Horace Moore and Matt Bungo a strong, strange tie was formed. Our hero had an impression that the end of his friend's service was yet to come, but how, or in what direction, he could not imagine. There were mysterious signs in Bungo's looks, and occasionally by accident, mysterious words were dropped; but Horace was willing to wait, trusting that it would all come out in good time.



CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHADOW IN THE POST-OFFICE.

At Ingleside things moved on through the winter quite evenly. Lyon Hargrave drank a great deal of brandy, and had much company up from New York. Ordinarily a young man in like situation, with a million of property at command, and of convivial habits, would have squandered his money, but not so the host of Ingleside. He was an adept in the art of gaming, and among those who accepted his hospitality were many young gentlemen of means, who, under the influence of rare old wines, and often stronger liquors, played recklessly, and lost heavily. A few of them suspected, at length, the true character of their host, and accepted his invitations no more; but the greater part of them thought him "a glorious fellow," and paid dearly for their association. Occasionally Lyon went down to New York for a week or so, showing by his looks, when he came home, that the week's race had been hard and fast.

Toward the servants of the old place Lyon was careless and kind—kind because he had no call to be unkind. He had brought up from the city a valet in the person of one Dick Bunker, who had been a marker of billiards, bar-keeper in a concert saloon, jockey on the race-course, and an accomplished dealer at faro. This fellow

was gentlemanly in his appearance, small of frame, and elegantly proportioned, dressing exquisitely, and wearing diamonds. He jumped at the opportunity of the service which the master of Ingleside offered him, and be sure he was not an idle spectator of the games of hazard which were played in the great drawing-room. Dick Bunker was accomplished in more ways than one, but those who had looked deepest into his character would not have hesitated to assert that his most brilliant accomplishment lay in the way of villainy. Dick never drank to intoxication, but Lyon sometimes did ; so the man was always at hand to care for the master in his helpless moods, and thus the other servants did not know the truth of their master's life.

With the beginning of the New Year, Lily Merton received a letter from Horace Moore. It had been brought home by a ship which the *Speedwell* had met at sea, and had been enclosed in a package to Mr. Alfred Dwinal. The package had been wet with sea-water, and the old merchant had enclosed the letter in a fresh envelope, which he superscribed and prepaid with his own hand. But for the soil and grime of the sea, and the fresh envelope of Mr. Dwinal, with the simple New York postmark, Lily might never have got that letter.

The missive was tender and loving, and told of her hero's adventures to the date of writing. One paragraph in it puzzled her, or, at least, exercised her curiosity to a great degree. It was as follows :

"I have met with a strange friend since leaving you, and stranger things than his friendship are, I think, in store for me. At some time I may explain, but at present there is mystery in the matter. The temptation to tattle is strong, but I must restrain myself until I have made assurance doubly sure. Borrow no trouble

from this, darling. I am safe and well, and, as I have told you before, my situation is very pleasant. My superiors find me equal to every requirement, and those below me have not refused me their respect and obedience."

Over this paragraph of the very lengthy letter, Lily pondered long and anxiously. What did it mean? She feared there was danger somewhere for her lover. But, in the end, she could only pray for him, and await further developments. She answered the letter, with an answer all love and devotion, and then hid the precious missive away in her bosom.

Lyon Hargrave was, through the winter, an occasional visitor at the attorney's. He had conceived a passion for Lily that was almost insane; and, since he had gained Ingleside, his next desire of life was to gain the beautiful girl for his wife. But he was not blind in his passion. He knew that his court would be useless while Horace Moore was upon the stage. He knew of the letter which Lily had received from the sea, and he did not want her to receive another. His thoughts upon this subject he spoke aloud to himself, as he paced to and fro in his library one Sabbath evening, after he had learned of the letter. Out of respect to his servants, and to his neighbors, and to his position as a Justice of the Peace, he kept quiet on the Sabbath.

Thus he soliloquized:

"Sugg does not make quick work. But, why should I expect it? He said himself he might wait for a foreign port, perhaps Calcutta. He was only pledged that Moore should not come back again. There was nothing said about letters. Death and destruction! he will be writing continually until his breath is stopped. I must anticipate the taking-off. The game I play for

now is not to be won off-hand. I must play my cards carefully ; but first, I must deal myself a hand that cannot be beaten. By — ! I'll do it !”

His hands came together with an oath, and then he sat down and considered ; and when he had considered, he sent for hot water and sugar, and directed Dick to bring on the brandy.

On Monday morning Lyon Hargrave went down to the post-office. The postmaster of Oxington was a store-keeper in a small way, and the office was arranged in a corner of his store. The income of the office was very slight—scarcely more than enough to pay a man for the time consumed in assorting and delivering letters and papers, to say nothing of rent. The man's name was Hardy, a man advanced in years, and not over and above smart. In fact, there had been many complaints concerning his slowness and bungling in the matter of distributing the mails.

Lyon was fortunate enough to find the postmaster in his store without a customer.

“ Mr. Hardy,” he said, smilingly, as he took a seat by the old box-stove, “ I have a little matter of business which I think will work to your advantage, while, at the same time, it will yield satisfaction to me. I have a friend in New York, a worthy young man, just graduated from college, who wishes to pursue his studies a while longer by himself ; and I have thought that he could do this better if he had other healthful occupation to take up a part of his time. Will you tell me what is your yearly income from the post-office ?”

“ Just about two hundred and fifty dollars, sir. That's what it was last year.”

“ Well, now see : If you will take my young friend into the office, and let him feel that he has entire charge—let him, in fact, have entire charge, for I want him to

feel the responsibility, I will pay you two hundred and fifty dollars a year rent. I do this out of regard for my friend. He is a deserving youth, an orphan, in whom I have taken the deepest interest. The Department allows you to entrust the affairs of your office to a clerk?"

"I may have one clerk," answered Hardy, "who must be sworn, and for whose good faith I must be responsible."

"As for the young man's good faith," said Lyon, smiling blandly, "I will be responsible for it to any amount. What say you to my proposition—that is, if, after you have seen the young man, you shall like him?"

"Really, Mr. Hargrave, your offer is a most liberal one—liberal to me, and liberal to your friend; and if you make it in good faith I accept it cheerfully—that is, if, as you say, the young man pleases me. Our office is not large, but its duties are as sacred as though its annual income was thousands instead of hundreds."

"Thank you, Mr. Hardy. You shall see my friend within a day or two, and if you conclude to accept him, I will fix the rest of the business as you may choose to have it."

Lyon had arisen, and turned towards the door, when he stopped and said, with one of his blindest smiles:

"By the way, Mr. Hardy, I don't care to have all my little charities known to the world. I am bothered enough as it is. If I choose to assist a worthy young man, I don't know as it is any business of the outer world. I would prefer that my name should not be mentioned in connection with your appointment of a clerk."

"I can appreciate your feelings, Mr. Hargrave," returned the old man, with honest sincerity, "and I will respect them. Your name shall not be mentioned."

"Thank you, sir." And with this Lyon Hargrave departed.

Arrived at Ingleside, Lyon summoned his valet.

"Do you think," he asked, "that you could find Dolph Splinter in the city?"

"Yes, sir. I can hit him, sure."

"Dick, I have use for that fellow."

"Eh?"

"I am going to put him into the post-office, as clerk and sole manager. Can you comprehend?"

"Aye."

Dick Bunker winked knowingly as he spoke. He could understand that his master wished to gain control of the mails to and from Oxington, but he did not know—he had no clew to the knowledge—what was the chief motive.

"Will you start off at once, and bring Dolph back with you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And tell him to keep mum on the way."

"Yes, sir."

"Here are fifty dollars. You can help Dolph if he needs it. Be sure he comes looking well. He is to play the part of a college graduate here."

"He can do it, sir; never fear."

"All right. And now be off."

On the evening of the third day from that, Dick Bunker returned, and with him came Adolphus Splinter, a young man of four-and-twenty, exceedingly trim and good-looking, and accounted one of the best billiard players in New York. He was of that large class to be found in every great city—children of circumstance. His brain was clear and ample, and his heart was not bad; but as an orphan in early boyhood he had been left to pick his way to manhood as best he could, and

his way, without any free choice on his part, had lain through quagmires and quicksands. The labor of his life had sharpened his wits, and at the same time blunted his conscience. His perceptive faculties were largely developed, but they had never been exercised in a moral direction.

After supper Lyon Hargrave called Adolphus into the library, and freely unfolded to him his plan. In conclusion he said :

“If you accept the place, Dolph, you can find board at the hotel in the village, or in some more retired place, if you will, and you may come up here and spend an evening when you please. What say you?”

Adolphus accepted the offer without hesitation, and promised to keep the faith. He would be true to the interests of his friend and patron in the office, and he would appear to be as studious as possible.

On the following morning Lyon took his *protégé* down to the village, and introduced him to Mr. Hardy.

Never had the old gentleman beheld a youth who impressed him more favorably. Such meekness and intelligence combined were rare. And then the young man spoke so sweetly and so correctly. Surely nothing coarse, vulgar, or profane, could inhabit so fair a temple. At the end of half an hour's conversation Mr. Hardy had engaged Adolphus Splinter as his clerk to take charge of the post-office, and Lyon Hargrave, Esquire, had administered to him the prescribed oath. Touching the other matter, having seen the young man, and being so well pleased with him, the old gentleman was entirely willing to accept Lyon's word for the payment of the stipulated sum as rent.

Mr. Hardy kept the secret he had promised to Lyon, so the outsiders did not know of the young 'Squire's hand in the matter. They only knew the new hand in

the post-office as a college student, seeking partial employment of business, while he pursued his studies. And the people of Oxington who had occasion to visit the post-office were greatly pleased with the change. The mail-matter was delivered with a promptness before unknown, and the young clerk was as courteous and polite as he was expert. The young ladies especially were pleased, and in time it came to pass that more than one fair damsel lingered longer at the office than there was absolute need of. But who can wonder? Not many young men had appeared in Oxington like this young man. And a scholar, too.

The winter wore away, and not another letter came to Lily from over the sea. She became anxious and alarmed. Surely, some evil had befallen her lover.

The ice was gone from the river, and the snow had melted from the hills, and still no letter.

The grass grew green; the trees budded and blossomed, and the letter came not yet.

And then Lily felt in her heart that evil had fallen. She felt its chilling touch. She had applied at the post-office every day, but only to receive the same blank answer.

We will do Adolphus Splinter the justice to say that more than once his heart smote him sore, and he almost wished that he had not accepted his present situation. One evening he went up to Ingleside, and delivered to Lyon a letter which should have gone to Lily Merton, and as he did so, he said:

"Lyon, old boy, this is rather tough for me. I can't stand it always. When that girl came to the office this afternoon, so anxious and so suffering, I'm blessed if I hadn't half a mind to throw up my commission, and give her the letter."

"Don't be foolish, Dolph. I mean the girl only well.

This lover of hers is a nobody—a mere adventurer upon the sea,—and it will be a mercy to her to break off the match. Look ye, my boy, when that girl is my wife I will make you a present of a thousand dollars over and above what I have already promised you.”

“Oho! the wind sets in that quarter, does it?”

“Yes.”

“Well, Lyon, I’ll keep the faith now I am in for it, but I wish you could contrive some way to stop Miss Merton’s coming to the office. Her face haunts me.”

“My dear boy, don’t you borrow further trouble. I was thinking of that very thing when you came in. It is time that the letters were stopped, or, at all events, that she should stop going for them. She shall not trouble you much more. You will find Dick in the billiard-room, I think. Tell him to get you a bottle of wine.”

When Adolphus had gone Lyon Hargrave locked the door, and then sat down by the lamp and opened the letter which had come so wickedly and so cruelly out of its course to him. It was dated at Calcutta. The writer was well and prosperous, and he would be happy but for one thing. “I have as yet received but the one letter from you. Three ships have come in, with mail-bags from the States, but not a letter for me. Oh, darling, if you knew how anxiously and how painfully I am waiting.” Then further on he wrote: “I should not wonder, darling, if I came home captain of our ship. There is another large ship here, the captain and first mate of which have died of fever—a ship belonging to the same owners as the *Speedwell*—and Percy may take command of her. If he does, I shall have this grand vessel. And, O! how doubly glad should I be in my new position if I had a letter from you to keep my commission company.”

With an oath Lyon Hargrave started to his feet, and crushed the letter in his hand.

"Where is Sugg Witkill?" he cried. "Moore has not mentioned his name once in any of his letters. Is the man false, or has he failed? Sugg is not a coward. Good heavens! he must have had opportunity ere this."

Lyon went to the sideboard and swallowed half a tumbler of brandy, and then paced up and down with the crushed letter in his hand. At length he stopped.

"Don't give up yet?" he said, smiting himself upon the breast. "Sugg said he must wait until they reached a foreign port. Let us wait."

Then he drank more brandy, and then sat down to the table, and drew writing materials towards him. And he wrote an article upon a slip of note-paper. And this article he copied upon two other slips, after which he sat down and awaited the coming of his valet.

"Dick," said he, when that individual made his appearance, "here are three items, or three copies of the same item, which I want published in New York to-morrow. You will take the early boat and run down. You are acquainted with the sub-editors and reporters. Will you attend to it?"

"Yes, sir."

"Not a word of whence they came."

"I'm not quite a fool, Lyon."

"All right. You have money enough?"

"Plenty."

"Then be off in the first down boat."

"It shall be done, sir."

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

And with this Lyon Hargrave drank another glass of brandy, and then went to bed.



CHAPTER IX.

THE SHADOW UPON LILY MERTON.

It was on Saturday evening—now in the month of August—when the clerk of Mr. Merton brought the mail-budget to the house. Lily had not been to the post-office for several days. She had not the heart. Yet on this Saturday evening she awaited the coming of the mail anxiously. There might something come. Little dreamed she what !

There was no letter for her. She stifled a sob, and sat down. Presently she recovered herself, and taking a New York paper she looked for the news. Lately she had been in the habit of reading the shipping intelligence, as she often found word therein of American vessels in foreign ports. As she read, a paragraph fixed her attention, as by a spell, even before she had distinguished a word. She read it. It was as follows :

“The painful intelligence comes to us, by way of the overland route, *via* the Mediterranean, of the death of HORACE MOORE, first-mate of the ship *Speedwell*, of New York. He died in Calcutta, of malignant fever. Also the captain and first-mate of the American ship *Xerxes* died of the same fatal disease. These three were officers of surpassing excellence, and their untimely loss will be deeply felt.”

Lily read, and swooned away, and later her father

found her prone upon the floor, with the newspaper clutched in her cold grasp. He summoned the assistance of the female help, and then sent for the doctor.

The blow did not kill. Under careful nursing Lily came back to life, and came back to a full realization of the calamity which had befallen her. Fever set in, with delirium, and the wretched girl sank very low. She cared not to get well, though she had no thought of self-destruction.

"Mary," she said, one day, to her attendant, "I would rather die than not. I care not to live since Horace is dead. I shall meet him in a better world."

Mary Carter was a girl of six-and-twenty, or thereabouts, who had been in the family since the death of Mrs. Merton, now six years. She had proved herself faithful and capable, and was a good housekeeper, or, a good hand to work, with Lily to manage. She really loved her young mistress, and sympathized with her in her misfortune and grief, but she could not enter into the deeper feeling. Her heart had never been moved with such love as Lily had felt, and she knew nothing of its glory or its power. She did not like to see her lady so cast down, she did not think there was any need of it. She thought she would be acting the part of a friend to lift her mind from its melancholy brooding.

"Indeed, Miss Lily," she said, with honest sincerity, "there are friends in this world for whom you should live. There are many left who love you dearly. It is not good that you should be cast down of your own free will."

"Mary!"

"Pardon me, Lily, but you are harming yourself. You know for whom you ought to live. Did you not promise your mother when she was dying, that you would take her place, as far as you could, in the house-

hold? Oh! my dear lady, remember how much you owe to others. Let the dark past go, and think of what good you may gain in the future."

"Hush, Mary. Say no more now."

That evening, Lyon Hargrave called at Mr. Merton's, and he gave to Mary Carter a neatly-folded parcel.

"It is a present for you, Mary," he said; "and I give it to you for your kindness to Lily. Oh, if I could only teach her to love me!"

Mary honestly sympathized with the man. She thought him all he professed to be. He had been very kind and very respectful to her, and she could not believe that evil was in his heart.

"Indeed, sir," she said, "if I could influence her that way I know I should be influencing her for her good."

"I think you would, Mary. But we must not be too abrupt. Help my love, if you can, and your goodness shall not be forgotten. Win Lily back to health and strength as speedily as possible."

Lyon then went into Mr. Merton's study, where he found the old attorney reading. Their conversation at that time was not important, save a question and an answer at its close. Mr. Merton was fully as anxious that his daughter should become the wife of Lyon Hargrave, as that gentleman was to make her such.

"Look ye, my friend," said Lyon, after he had put on his gloves, "considering that it would be best for all concerned that your daughter should become mistress of Ingleside, would you be willing to second an innocent ruse to that end—that is, supposing that other means fail?"

"Anything, Lyon, within the bounds of human reason, to make Lily your wife."

"It shall not be a difficult task, Mr. Merton. We will perfect our plans in the future if we find need."

And Lyon Hargrave went up to Ingleside, where some boon companions from the city were awaiting his coming for a game at cards.

A few days after this Lily observed particularly the beautiful bouquet of fragrant flowers upon the stand between the windows of her chamber. When she came to think of it she knew they must be of hot-house culture, for the season of such flowers of native growth had passed.

"Mary," she said, "you are very kind to me. And others must be kind. Does my father bring those flowers?"

"No, Lily. They do not come from your father."

"Who sends them?"

"Can you not guess?"

"Is it—"

"Who?"

The sick girl started up to a sitting posture, and a bright red flush was upon her cheek.

"Is it—Lyon Hargrave?"

"Yes, Miss Lily. Oh, you don't know how that poor man sorrows for you—how he mopes and moans."

Mary Carter was trying, perhaps, to pay for the bright new silk dress she had found in the package which Lyon had given her.

"Mr. Hargrave has been here almost every day, and—"

Lily interrupted her by a gesture.

"Let me take the bouquet, Mary."

Still sitting up in her bed the sick girl took the fragrant flowers from the hand of her attendant, and, with true precision, hurled them out at the open window.

"No more! no more!" she gasped; and then sank back exhausted.

Mary was frightened; but the paroxysm did not prove

a serious one. On the contrary, it acted as a healthful stimulant to the invalid's dormant energies. She had found something to excite her combativeness, and to start afresh the current of her life.

"Be not alarmed," she said, when she had regained her breath. "I am not faint; but I shall faint—I shall go mad—if you suffer another flower from that man's hands to enter my chamber. Oh, Mary, you don't know how I loathe, how I dread Lyon Hargrave. Hush! you don't know him yet. Say no more now; and, if you love me, speak not his name to me again."

What could Mary Carter do? She could not yet believe evil of Lyon Hargrave, nor could she willingly wound and pain the mistress whom she truly loved; so she held her peace, trusting that returning strength would bring with it to the invalid a clearer perception of her own interests. To the blunt and homely understanding of the housemaid only a woman bereft of sense would wantonly cast away such a prize as was offered in the mistress-ship of Ingleside.

For some days after that Mary received the flowers which Lyon Hargrave brought, or sent, and held her peace. She dared not carry them to Lily's room, and she had not the heart to tell the donor the fate of his floral offerings. But the confession could not be long delayed. One day Lyon asked her if Lily had yet spoken of the flowers; and then, with a gulp, and with great effort, Mary told the truth. She did not know how to lie.

Lyon Hargrave stamped his foot with rage, and an oath came near slipping from his lips, but he caught the expression of Mary Carter's face in season, and held back the profane words.

"Pardon me, Mary," he said. "It was a sore blow."

"Of course it was, sir," cried the maid, sympathiz-

ingly ; "and I would have helped it if I could. But the young lady is not herself. Wait, sir. Her heart is yet sore. Time may work wonders."

But Lyon saw more clearly. He did not think he could win Lily's love, nor her confidence. This made him angry, and he swore that the fair, stubborn girl should be his wife if she lived. In his rage and chagrin he was capable of doing anything. He went home, sat down at the table in the library, and when Dick Bunker came in his only remark was :

"Bring me some hot water and some sugar, and then leave me."

The hot water and the sugar were brought, and then Lyon was left alone. He mixed a hot brandy toddy, and drank it, and then mixed and drank another. Then he arose and paced to and fro.

"I think," he finally said, stopping in his walk, and pressing his fingers upon his brow, "that Mr. Merton is in want of money. He plainly intimated to me, not many days ago, that he must raise a thousand dollars this month. I think I can throw the money in his way."

He went to the old cabinet, or secretary, and from one of the inner drawers he took a package of neatly folded papers, from which he selected half a dozen or so, and put them into his pocket-book. The others he restored to the drawer, and then, having drunk more brandy, he went up into the billiard-room.

On the following morning Lyon soaked his head in cold water, and drank brandy and soda, and he flattered himself, when the brandy had reached his brain, that he was as good as new. Poor fool he, and poor fools all, for thinking so ! Go, my fast-living youth, and ask the man who has been through the mill how he likes the result. See him, at middle-age, when the real comforts of life ought to be opening to him the way of

peace and joy, broken and pain-stricken—his stomach a mere wreck and a seat of endless pains, and the very light of nature turned blue and sulphurous. Ah, it is a heavy penalty you must pay for these early drafts upon nature's powers, and be sure the bill will be presented—and be presented, too, by an agent who has the full, fell power to enforce payment. Go on if you will ; only know that the day of reckoning must come.

Aye, Lyon Hargrave, when the soda had stirred the stomach, and the alcohol had mounted to the brain, felt as good as new, and when he had eaten his breakfast he walked down to Oxington, and called at the office of Asher Merton, Esq., whom he found alone. For a time, the visitor led the conversation in ordinary channels, chatting pleasantly and smilingly. At length he took from his pocket-book a package of folded papers, saying, as he did so :

"Mr. Merton, here are notes and accounts left by my uncle which should be settled. Will you look them over, and tell me if you think you can collect any of them? Of course I am not particularly in need of the money, but I do not like that such matters should stand too long unsettled."

The attorney took the papers, seven in number, and when he had examined them he selected four as good.

"These," said he, "I think I can collect ; but the other three, I fear, are bad eggs."

"What is the amount of those you consider good?"

Merton figured awhile upon a piece of paper, and finally announced :

"The amount, principal and interest, is two thousand and ten dollars."

"And you think you can collect that?"

"I do."

"Then you may go at it as soon as you please."

Lyon had taken his hat and arisen as if to depart, when he stopped, and with a smiling nod, remarked :

“It is a delicate subject, Mr. Merton, but I may say to you that any assistance I can render to one who is to become to me as a father, I shall not withhold. I think you understand me.”

If the attorney understood, he made the wish father to the thought, and understood as his own necessities dictated.

“I think I understand,” he said.

“All right,” responded Lyon, heartily. “So you will make it for your own interest to collect as much of that money as possible.”

And with this he took his leave.

And while he wends his way back to Ingleside, let us look for a moment in at the post-office.

Master Adolphus Splinter, as we have before intimated, had not a bad heart. Left to its own instincts the humane part of it predominated. By this time he thoroughly understood Hargrave's plot against Lily Merton; and he had suspected from the first that the announcement of the death of Horace Moore had been of Lyon's fabricating, though he was not positively sure. His heart had fairly ached at sight of Lily's misery, and when he heard of her sickness he felt that he had helped to contribute thereto. It was not for him a pleasant thought. He had come to regard the stricken maiden as something sacred—something far above the women whom he had known elsewhere—and when he thought of such a being, so pure and so good, forced to wed with Lyon Hargrave, he shuddered to the very core.

On this very morning when Lyon carried the papers to Mr. Merton, Adolphus had in his possession a letter from over the sea—a letter bearing the Calcutta post-

mark, and also the post-mark of the royal mail steamer from Bristol. He had had this letter four days. He had pledged his word to his employer that no such letter should reach Lily Merton, and he would not break that word. It did not add to his happiness thus far to keep faith with Hargrave, but he had made the leap, and he felt that he must hold his ground, however unpleasant and ungrateful it might be.

But he had not pledged his word that he would deliver all letters directed to Lily Merton up to Lyon Hargrave. Of course such had been the understanding, implied as a part of the contract, but it had not been explicitly set forth as the other part had been. In short, Adolphus Splinter was willing to tamper with the principle of "honor among thieves" in behalf of humanity. He had already lied to his employer in telling him that no letter had come, while, at the very time of the declaration, he had such a letter in his possession.

Late on the evening of that day, when Adolphus was alone, and after much travail of soul, he broke the seal of the letter from over the sea directed to Lily Merton, and he read it from beginning to end. Its burden was undying love ; sorrow at not hearing from the absent darling ; with hope and bright promise for the future. The writer was captain of a noble ship, and he had taught his crew to love him.

"My soul !" cried Adolphus, twisting the letter in his hand, "what would Lily Merton give for this bit of paper ? Not all the medicine of all the doctors in the world could uplift her as could this."

A brief pause, and then he continued :

"She cannot have it. I will keep faith with Lyon thus far ; but, by heaven ! HE shall never see it, nor shall he see another if I can help it. He may think what he pleases of the stoppage of the letters, but he

shall not have them. So far as I can prevent it he shall not be armed against the poor girl with a knowledge of the movements of her true lover."

And Adolphus Splinter was true to his resolve.

By and by, Lyon Hargrave heard that another foreign mail had arrived in New York with letters from India. He went to the post-office to see if a letter had come for Lily Merton.

"Not a letter," said Adolphus.

"The mail has come up from New York?"

"Yes."

"And this makes the third mail bringing Indian letters since one came for Miss Merton?"

"The third—yes."

And Lyon Hargrave went away with a look of malignant triumph upon his dark face. He entered the library at Ingleside, and sat down with a bottle of brandy at his elbow, and a glass in his hand; and as he drank he muttered to himself:

"Sugg Witkill must have done his work. Farewell to you, Mr. Horace Moore!"



CHAPTER X.

LILY'S PROMISE.

The cool and grateful days of September had come. The ripening grain was bowing its sunny head to the sweeping breeze, and the opening husks were revealing the golden corn. The banks of the beautiful Hudson were teeming with rich return to the thrifty husbandmen, and the passers upon the river could see the blushing fruit in masses thick and rare, looking out from amid the foliage.

And with the coming of the genial season, the health and strength of Lily Merton had returned. She was yet pale, and marks of melancholy were upon her face ; but her eyes had regained their wonted lustre, and the cheeks were not hollow as they had been.

One evening as she sat alone in her work-room, her father came in and sat by her side. There was a cloud upon his brow, and his movements were nervous and uneasy.

"My child," he said, with his hands clutched upon his knees, "I have come to talk seriously with you. The time for trifling is past."

The ice thus broken, he paused and took breath, and then went on more freely :

"Whatever may once have been your feelings towards

Horace Moore, it cannot matter now. He is long since passed from the stage of existence, and you have had ample time for proper reflection. Had he lived, I doubt if he could have been anything to you ; but dead, you should forget him. And now, Lily, you must give me your respectful attention. You know that I am about to speak of Lyon Hargrave. Do not turn away, but listen to me. You cannot say that Lyon has intruded himself upon you. Loving you as he does, has he not rather been wonderfully forbearing ? He offers you his hand, and will make you the proud and honored mistress of Ingleside. His heart you have possessed since first he knew you. Can you not be reasonable, my child, and turn your heart to him ?”

“Turn my heart to Lyon Hargrave !” pronounced Lily, with a shudder that prevaded her whole frame. “Could you turn your heart to that which you utterly loathed and despised ?”

“Lily, I cannot hear you speak thus. You have no cause for such loathing. Lyon has been towards you all that is honorable and loving.”

“Honorable he can never be,” retorted the girl, quickly ; “and his love is more dangerous than his hate. If you love me, father, let this subject drop. Oh, if you care for me one bit, mention not his name in my hearing again !”

Asher Merton was slightly discomfited by this outburst, but he quickly regained himself, and the cloud upon his brow deepened and darkened.

“Lily,” he said, very slowly, and with the tremulousness of strong emotion, “if you will not listen to reason, perhaps you will listen to the call of stern necessity. What will you do if I am taken from you ?”

“Taken from me ?—you ?”

“Aye, if I am taken from you ?”

"Surely, my father," with a bewildered look, "I do not understand you."

"And yet, my child, the thing may happen if you do not put forth your hand to save me."

"My father," cried Lily, seizing his arm, "what do you mean? What new horror is this?"

"It need not be a horror at all, Lily. You have it in your power to make it a blessing."

"In mercy's name, what is it?"

"Listen, my child, and you shall know. I had hoped that I might not be reduced to this extremity, but you have forced me to the revelation. You are aware that upon the death of Walter Hargrave I was indebted to him to a large amount, over six thousand dollars, for money borrowed. Those notes Lyon, of course, holds. But under that claim he could only seize upon my visible property; and you know that were I to-day stripped of every penny I own, it could not satisfy that claim, nor the half of it. But there is another more serious. Not many weeks since Lyon placed certain accounts in my hands for collection. I collected thereon two thousand dollars, and that money—"

"That money, father, what?"

"Oh, my child, I meant no wrong. I thought so surely that your heart would turn in time to Lyon, that—that—"

"You used the money?"

"Yes, I used the money. I was hard pressed—very, very hard, and I thought—O! I thought—"

"That my hand would cancel the bond?" cried Lily, starting to her feet, and standing before her father with pale cheek and burning eyes. "You would sacrifice your child to the base use of trade! You would put the life of your own—"

Asher Merton put forth his hands so beseechingly that Lily stopped.

"Oh, my dear, dear child," he said, with his hands extended and clasped together, "I did not think thus, as God is my judge, I did not! I fully believed, when the first pang of your grief had passed, that you would willingly become mistress of Ingleside. Sit down, Lily. Don't stand there."

Lily resumed her seat, and her father proceeded:

"Lyon has confided all his love—all his hopes—all his fond and glowing aspirations, to me, and I have sympathized with him deeply. I could not help it. You may say that my wish has been father to my thought. I shall not deny it; but I can assert that the wish was born of a most devout and earnest desire for the good of my child. Had Horace lived I might have withheld my aspiring hopes, but when I knew you had no other near heart-tie of earth, I dared to hope that you would, in time, answer the love of Lyon Hargrave."

Lily, by a great effort, had somewhat calmed herself, and when she next spoke her voice was low and steady, though yet bearing the note of pain.

"Do you mean," she said, "that you have laid yourself liable to arrest and imprisonment?"

"It is too true, my child. Oh, do not blame me too severely. I thought no harm when I did it, and I meant no wrong. Lyon and I had talked so much of his love, and of his hopes of wedding you, that I had already come to regard him as a son-in-law; and when I had that money in my possession—money which I knew he did not need for use, and when I was pressed well nigh to distraction, I used it. Under the statute it may be made a crime, and if I cannot repay it, I must—must go—"

"Hush! Answer me another question: Will Lyon Hargrave do this thing?"

"If all hope of winning your hand is denied him, he will surely do it."

"And thus he would show his love for me!"

"Ah, my child, you do not know all the secrets of the human heart. You must not set the instincts of your own heart up as a test. Lyon can love most deeply, but he is not a saint. You should know that warmest love, under strong and aggravating provocation, may be turned to deadliest hate—that is, with some natures. After this long and anxious waiting Lyon may be driven to desperation, if he finds himself finally and coldly cast off. He has the blood of his Italian mother in his veins; and though I believe he could be most kind in love, I know he can be most vengeful in anger and hate."

Lily arose, and paced several times across the narrow apartment. At length she stopped before her father.

"In one word, my father," she said, in a hushed, frightened tone, "if I will not give my hand to Lyon Hargrave, he will cast you into prison?"

"I fear he will."

"He has the power?"

"Yes, my child, he has the power, and no effort I can make can avert the blow."

"Then let me think. Say no more at this time. I am not fit to talk now. To-morrow evening come to me again. Hush! No more now."

Asher Merton left his daughter's presence bowed and stricken. He loved the dear girl as deeply as he was capable of loving anything, and at that moment he sorrowed and moaned because he had not money enough to pay off Lyon Hargrave's claim, and let him go. The last thing to touch his heart had been his

daughter's anguish, and he held in that mood until another influence came.

An hour later Lyon Hargrave appeared in the attorney's study. He was respectful and polite, and still appeared anxious. Had Mr. Merton held the promised interview with his daughter?

Yes. And Merton related what had transpired. He did not repeat Lily's speech wherein she gave her estimate of the suitor's character, but he gave all that was necessary.

"She may relent, after all," said Lyon, hopefully; "and if she does, not only shall she be proud, honored and happy, but you, my dear sir, shall know no more of financial trouble."

And now the sympathies of Asher Merton were tilting over upon the side of Lyon Hargrave, and the direction of his unspoken prayer was changed. Instead of wishing that he had money enough to pay Lyon's claim, and let him go, he wished that his daughter might come to her senses, and become mistress of Ingle-side.

When her father had gone Lily Merton went into her chamber, and sat down before a painted picture of her mother. It was a sweet, mild face that looked out from the canvass—a face that told whence the child had derived her beauty.

"Oh! my sainted mother!" she cried, with folded hands upraised, "if you can look down upon me now, let your sweet influence guide me! Oh! I need help very much."

After a time she sat down, with her head bowed upon her hand, and tried to think. Should she sacrifice herself to save her father? Had her father won the right to demand such sacrifice? Had Heaven made it her duty to grant the sacrifice, whether merited or

not? And to what would the sacrifice lead her? To a life-long union with Lyon Hargrave!

She looked again upon the picture of her mother, and the thought came to her that she had not only a mother in the Better World, but that another was there whom she might meet and love while eternity should last. And then came a wild, surging thought under the weight of which she broke entirely down. She dared think no more that night. So she sought her pillow, and tried to sleep.

On the following day Lily walked away across the fields into the deep wood back of Oxington. All day long she was in motion, and not until the shadows of evening had fallen did she sit down to rest. When the candles were lighted she had become calm and quiet, but with a calmness and quietness that was cold and stern.

When her father came to her she asked him if he still wished that she should become the wife of Lyon Hargrave.

"For your own good, my child, I wish it," he answered.

"O!" she cried, indignantly, "put not my good into that scale. Answer me directly and honestly. On your own account do you wish me to marry with Lyon Hargrave?"

The attorney hesitated, but finally answered:

"Yes, Lily, if you will have it so; for my sake I would have you become his wife. But, my child, did I not truly believe—"

"Hush! Say no more. I have your wish, and I know its source; and now take my answer. In one year from the day on which Horace left me, if both you and Lyon Hargrave shall then demand it, I will become Lyon Hargrave's wife."

"Lily!"

"That is my answer."

"Do you remember the day you mention?"

"Yes. It was the twenty-third day of December."

"Then he must wait more than three months?"

"And is that long? You will remember that his proposal is now for the first time received by me."

"But, my child—"

Lily put out her hand, and arose to her feet. She looked queenly as she stood there, and her father quailed beneath the intense light of her steady eyes.

"My father," she said, "I told you I would give you my answer this evening. I have spent a night and a day in prayerful thought, and the answer is given. I have some rights left to me, and I will not surrender them. You may choose the manner of sacrifice, but I will choose the time. Go and tell Lyon Hargrave what I have said; and if, after that, he sends you to prison, I will either go with you, or I will go begging upon my knees to those who have the power of mercy and pardon. Go. I have said all."

And from that time Lily Merton moved about like one in a dream, cold and heart-broken, with no care for life, looking only to the shadowy land beyond the vale for rest.

As for Mr. Merton, he did not meet with the rebuff he had feared. When he had told to Lyon his daughter's ultimatum, that young gentleman seemed perfectly satisfied.

"It is just the thing," he said, tapping the attorney familiarly upon the shoulder. "It will bring our wedding at Christmas time. We could not name it better. Let us hope that Lily thought of this when she named that day."

And Asher Merton tried to smile, and tried to think—

or tried to make it appear that he thought—that Lily had had her mind thus directed. But he made poor work of it. And yet, in the end, he felt more at ease than he had felt for a long time. He told himself that his child would be happy, in time, as mistress of Ingleside, and this he had cherished in his mind so long that he had really come to believe it. Regarding Lyon Hargrave as the master of a million of money he had forgotten the shortcomings of youth, and had failed to detect the dark spots in the present. Very few, if any, are entirely free from bias of some kind ; and when we consider Asher Merton's weakness, and his pecuniary situation, we shall not much wonder that he was anxious to marry his daughter to a millionaire.

When Lyon Hargrave reached Ingleside he found Adolphus Splinter in the billiard-room. When the game then in process had been concluded, he called him down into the library. He felt fresh anxiety now concerning Horace Moore.

"Has there been any letter, of late, for Lily Merton?" he asked.

"Not a letter," said Adolphus, unblushingly.

"There have been foreign mails within a week?"

"Yes, two of them."

"She shall not have a letter which does not pass through my hands?"

"I swear it!" And Adolphus swore honestly.

And on the very next day he delivered to Lyon two letters for Lily Merton, one bearing the Albany post-mark, and the other from New Haven. Lyon loosened the seals with steam, and having found who the writers were, he resealed them, and gave them back ; and that evening Lily received friendly letters from two of her old school-mates.

Adolphus had sworn that Lily Merton should receive

no letters which did not pass through Lyon's hands ; but within the week another letter had come from over the sea. This letter he did not read. He simply opened it, and saw that it was from Horace Moore, and then hid it away. He had begun to chafe under his yoke. The position, even to him, was humiliating. And yet he would not entirely betray the man who had given him his confidence, nor would he entirely serve him. As he had said before, so he said again :

"If Lilly Merton cannot read the letters of her true love, by heavens ! Lyon Hargrave shall not read them !"

For two weeks Lyon did not visit the house of the attorney, but on the Sabbath evening following he ventured to call. He found Mr. Merton alone, and after a time he asked for Lily. The host said he would go and speak with her.

In a little while Merton returned with a troubled look.

"My daughter does not feel well, Mr. Hargrave, and she begs to be excused !"

"Does not feel well enough to see me ?" said Lyon, biting his lips.

"Indeed, my dear boy, we must trust to time. There is no use in my trifling with you. You know the girl. She will come around by and by."

"Never mind," returned Lyon. "So she keeps her promise I care not for the rest. Only—she should know that she cannot commence to smooth the way of her married life too soon ! It might be well if you made her understand this."

Mr. Merton said he would seek to impress this self-evident fact upon his daughter's mind.

A few days after this, in the beginning of October, Adolphus came up to Ingleside, bringing another letter

addressed to Lily Merton. It bore the post-mark of Rollington.

"Where is Rollington?" asked Lyon, after he had made out the mark.

"It is some forty or fifty miles to the west of us, near the Delaware River," answered Adolphus, who had become quite thoroughly posted in the geography of the State.

Lyon broke the seal, and ran his eyes hastily over the opening sentences of the letter, and then glanced at the bottom and read the name of the writer. An oath burst from his lips as the hand which held the letter dropped upon his knee. But he recovered himself quickly, and said to Adolphus, with a light laugh :

"It is from an old flame. I think I shall hand it to the lady myself. What say you to a game of billiards?"

Adolphus was willing, and having drunk some brandy, they adjourned to the billiard-room. But Lyon played badly, and soon gave up his cue to Dick Bunker.



CHAPTER XI.

THE SHADOWS THICKEN !

Once more alone in his library, Lyon Hargrave closed and locked the door, drank more brandy, and then took from his pocket the letter which Adolphus had brought to him, and sat down with it by the shaded lamp. In the previous hasty perusal he had gained a knowledge of its general drift. The handwriting was bold and strong, though quite neat and proper, and it might have passed for the work of man or woman. Having opened the missive a second time, the master of Ingleside read carefully as follows :

“ROLLINGTON, *October 3d*, 1841.

“MY DEAR MISS MERTON :—On this calm Sabbath evening, with my heart bare before my Maker, and after much anxious thought, I sit down to write to you, freely and truthfully, just as I would write to a dear sister. If I shall appear to take an unwarranted liberty, I am sure you will pardon me.

“Lily Merton, word has reached me in this far-away place, it came by an old servant from Ingleside who paid me a visit, that you had promised your hand to Lyon Hargrave, and that you were to be married on Christmas day. At first I doubted, but the proof at length came so strong that I was forced to believe. And, my dear girl, I can imagine the influence which

has been brought to bear upon you, knowing, as I do, the hold which Lyon has upon your father in a pecuniary way. O! how foul is the wrong thus done. The last words which Walter Hargrave spoke in life were spoken to Horace Moore and myself. To Horace he said that the debt of Lily's father should be forgiven. He said that Lily was a blessed girl. He had sent for me to be present while he gave further important business directions, but he died without giving them. Yet, from the above, you can judge whom he regarded as his heir and executor. I know that Lyon Hargrave is not justly the heir of Ingleside.

"And now let me tell you of one more thing of which I am fully assured. If you have really promised your hand to Lyon Hargrave, I must believe you have done so under the conviction that Horace Moore is dead. *But I am sure he is not dead.* I saw the article in the newspaper announcing his death, and also the death of two officers of the ship *Xerxes*. But in two weeks after reading that article, I received a letter from Horace Moore, dated at Calcutta, in which he informed me that he had been appointed to the command of his ship. That letter must have been written after the published date of his death. In truth, Lily, there is not only mystery in this matter, but I believe there is great wickedness. I can see in it the hand of Lyon Hargrave. If you are mourning the death of your true love, do not yet despair. What may have happened since he wrote to me I cannot tell; but I know that the announcement of his death, as published in the papers, was false.

"I have been very sick with fever, or I should have seen you ere this. My mother is now sick, and I must nurse her; but she is improving, and as soon as I can leave her, I shall come to you. Oh! Lily Merton, I know that Horace loves you with all his heart and

soul, and I know that his very life is bound up in you. And I cannot believe that you have ceased to love him. As God lives, I believe that Horace Moore lives. Wait until you see me. I will be with you in two weeks, or in three, at the furthest; and if there is wrong and wickedness which I can sift out, I will not rest until it is done. Take heart, Lily, and believe me your true and devoted friend,

“EDITH SOMERBY.”

Lyon Hargrave read this letter through twice, and then rolled it, and clutched it in his hand as he might have clutched a viper which he must strangle. He remembered Edith Somerby, he knew her very well—knew her for a shrewd clear-headed, thoughtful woman, bold and fearless in the way of duty. And he knew that she knew him, that she had known him for years, that she had been his uncle's confidante and often counselor, and that she could be firm and persevering when she chose.

With a fierce oath he started to his feet, still strangling the letter in his hand.

“I should have looked to that woman before,” he muttered, as he strode across the apartment, and then stopped. “I should have been mindful of the danger. Of all who were present when my uncle's will was searched for she alone maintained a firm defiance of the result.” Another oath, and then: “She must be looked to. She must never see Lily Merton. I am not safe with that woman living!”

The excitement had used up the stimulant he had taken, and Lyon went to the sideboard and drank two glasses of brandy in quick succession, after which he paced up and down the room for a long time. At length he sat down by the lamp, and smoothed out the letter,

and read it again. Then he leaned his head upon his hand, and reflected.

It was nearly midnight when Lyon Hargrave folded the letter and placed it in his pocket-book; and when he arose from his seat the expression upon his dark face was lowering and vengeful. It boded ill to somebody. He stood awhile, with head bowed and hands clasped; then he drank more brandy, and then went to his chamber.

On the following morning Lyon turned over the care of the house to Dick Bunker, remarking that he had business in New York. The valet received the order without asking any questions. He saw that his master was stern and moody, and he knew that something of more than usual import had happened. He thought it might be money matters. He could think of nothing more serious than that. Used himself to being straightened, and remembering well when he had seen Lyon "dead broke," he could not fully understand that circumstance of fortune which lifted a man completely out from the way of want of money.

At the post-office Lyon stopped, and spoke privately with Adolphus.

"Be dead sure that not a letter of any kind reaches Miss Merton until I get back," was his word of direction, after he had stated his destination.

Adolphus promised that the order should be obeyed.

"Do not borrow any trouble," he added, honestly. "I can swear to you that since I came into the office Miss Merton has not received a letter through the mail that has not been first submitted to you."

"All right, Dolph; but be particularly careful while I am gone. Do not let anybody look over your shoulder while you are assorting the mails."

Adolphus, when he had seen his master depart, did

not think exactly as did Dick Bunker. He believed that this sudden trip had something to do with the letter which he had delivered on the previous evening ; and so lively was his curiosity that in the afternoon, when he had two hours to spare from the office, he walked up to Ingleside, and sought opportunity to speak with one of the old servants—a woman who had been in the cook's department for years, and to whom he had brought several letters.

"Nelly," said he, in an easy, off-hand way, after he had begged and drunk a tumbler of milk, "do you know anybody that lives in Rollington?"

"Off on the Delaware, d'y'e mean?"

"Yes."

"I know one. Edith Somerby lives there. She used to be our mistress. She was the old master's house-keeper."

"What sort of a woman was she?"

"Well, sir, she was what I call a good woman. Everything went smoothly where she was."

"Why didn't the young master keep her?"

"I couldn't tell you, sir."

"Have you never had your thoughts about it?"

"You mustn't ask me, sir."

"How did this Edith Somerby feel toward Horace Moore?"

"She loved him as the apple of her eye, sir, not as some thought she loved, for I know that her heart was buried with *THAT* love long ago ; but she loved him as a mother loves her child, or as a sister might love an only brother."

"And I don't doubt that you loved this Horace Moore?"

"How could I help it, sir? Oh, he was so kind, and so

good, and so cheerful and smiling always ! We all loved him, sir."

"And you all thought that he was to be the heir of Ingleside?"

"Indeed we did, sir. But it was not so to be. Our master must have changed his mind at the last moment. But Horace bore it bravely. He never complained. He bore it better than Mistress Somerby did. She isn't satisfied to this day. She don't believe—"

"Don't believe what?"

"Never mind, sir. It is none of my business."

"Good Nelly, won't you give me another glass of milk?"

"Indeed, sir, you shall have as much as you want."

"And when another letter comes from your brother I'll bring it up to you."

Adolphus drank the milk, and departed ; and the chains of his servitude galled more sorely than before.

In the meantime Lyon Hargrave had taken the boat for New York, where he arrived in the afternoon. His first movement, on landing, was to his old club-house, where he got dinner, and where he spent his time until evening. He drank lightly, and did not play. When it was dark he borrowed of one of the attendants a light box-coat and a jockey cap, and set forth toward the East River. He found the sign of the "Foul Anchor," and sought the rear entrance, by way of the low, dark arch, where he was forced to press the spring that took the place of a bell-pull. The summons was answered by a man who opened the door just a crack, and asked who was there.

"All is right and tight, Cerberus," answered the applicant.

The door was opened, and the visitor entered the little dirty parlor.

"Eh! Lyon Hargrave, as I live! Bless you, old boy, it's good for sore eyes to see you."

"It's me, Jo, and you may bring me a bottle of wine. And, mind you, not a word to a soul outside that I am here."

"Don't you fear, sir. We never tell who's in the parlor. You should know that by this time."

"I know you are careful, Jo. Let the wine be of the best."

"I think Madeira is your kind, sir?"

"Yes."

"That's got the quiet snap to it; and we've got some that's honest. Jack Tugby brought it over himself, and it got slipped out o' the forecastle without the sniff of the customs."

Jo went away, and soon returned with a bottle and two glasses on a Japanned waiter.

"You've brought a glass for yourself, eh?" said Lyon, smiling.

"No, sir, not particularly. I always bring a gentleman glasses enough for company, even if he don't want 'em."

"All right, Jo. Sit down and drink. I want to ask you a question."

Jo wiped the neck of the bottle and drew the cork, and then sat down, and when they had filled their glasses Lyon asked:

"Can you tell me anything of Molly Dowd?"

"Yes, sir, she was in here not an hour ago."

"And where is Matt Bungo?"

"I don't know, sir. He dropped out suddenly, almost a year ago, and I haven't seen or heard from him since."

"Dropped out?" repeated Lyon, in surprise.

"Yes, sir; and all I know about it is this: Matt came in here one night badly shaken up. He'd had a

scrimmage on the dock, and I fancy, from what he said, that he'd used his knife. At all events, he disappeared the next day, and I haven't heard a lisp of him since. It's my opinion that he cleared out to slip the police."

On the whole, Lyon was not sorry. If Matt was gone for good, there could be no danger of his coming down for blackmail, a thing which the gentleman had more than once thought of and feared.

"Well," he said, "let Matt go. I wish him no ill."

Another glass of wine, and then :

"Do you think you could find Molly Dowd?"

"Yes, sir."

"How is she now?"

"About the same, sir, up and down. She has a hard enough time of it, the Lord knows."

"Can she keep sober?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll tell you, Jo, I have' a fancy to try and help that girl. I have a place that she can fill if she will ; and if she can keep sober, and wants to get away from her old haunts, I can give her the chance. I wish you would go and find her, and bring her here."

"I'll do it, sir."

And Jo went out by the back way, leaving his guest to entertain himself over a well-thumbed volume of "*Boxiana*." In half an hour he returned, bringing with him Molly Dowd, whom he left with Lyon, taking himself off to the bar in front.

Molly has not changed much since we saw her last. If anything, she looks better. There is not so much bloat in her face, and her clothes are not so poor and soiled. Still she looks worn and haggard, and the stamp of the outcast is very plain.

“Lyon Hargrave,” she said, after Jo had gone, “is it you?”

“It is myself, Molly. . Sit down, I have something to say to you. Won’t you have a bit of wine?”

“I don’t mind, sir.”

Lyon poured out what there was in the bottle, filling a tumbler half full, and Molly drank it, and smacked her lips.

“I don’t drink stuff like that often,” she said. She knew what good wine was.

Lyon rang the bell, and ordered another bottle, and when Jo had delivered it, and retired, he filled the two glasses, and they drank together.

“Molly,” said Lyon, as he set his glass down, “you and I have known each other long enough to be open and above-board. I have something of importance to say to you, and I want your solemn promise that if you do not serve me, you will not betray my confidence.”

“Won’t our confidence be mutual?” asked Molly, nodding. The rich old wine had revived her, and she spoke freely.

“Yes, our confidence will be mutual if you enter my service, but I must expose the nature of that service to you before you can become a party to the contract.”

“Bah! Are you afraid to trust me, Lyon Hargrave? If you are, let me go.”

“No, Molly, I am not afraid to trust you; and to prove it I will open the business at once. And, mind you, if you serve me, I will pay you well for it. I will give you more money than you ever owned at one time before in your life.”

“That wouldn’t be much, Mr. Hargrave.”

“Never mind. You shall be satisfied. Will you have some more wine?”

"No, sir. I've had enough for now. Let me hear your business."

Lyon looked at the doors, and then drawing his chair nearer to the woman, he said :

"You know, Molly, that I have come into a large inheritance left to me by my uncle. There was a woman in my uncle's employ as housekeeper, whom I discharged. That woman is a tigress. She hates me, and would ruin me if she could. And, to a certain extent, she can ruin me. There are some things dearer to me than money, and of these she can rob me. I need not tell you how."

"She knows how you have lived, perhaps?" suggested Molly.

"Yes," said Lyon, with a nod ; "and she can blow on me if she chooses ; and I know that she means to blow. In short, Molly, I want that woman put out of my way ; and I will give you a thousand dollars if you will do it."

The woman caught her breath, and was silent for some moments. At length she said, nervously :

"That is something I never did."

"And you never earned so much money before?"

"No, sir."

"Well, there must be a first time for everything. This woman of whom I speak will be no loss to the world, while you and I will be gainers."

Molly twisted her fingers together, and reflected.

"A thousand dollars?" she muttered.

"Yes, and I will give you a full new outfit of clothes in addition."

"Where is the woman, at your place?"

"No. She is sixty miles away, on the Delaware."

"How am I to do it?"

"I'll tell you what I have thought of. You must take the stage on the Jersey side, and let them set you

down in the town adjoining the town in which this woman lives. Then you can walk the rest of the way until you find the house. It is a farm-house, and if you reach there in the evening, and profess to be faint and sick, they will take you in. Your looks will enable you to pass readily for a sick woman. And you can stay there until you can find opportunity to slip a bit of powder into something that my enemy will eat or drink. I can get a powder the effect of which will be such that no mortal can suspect foul play. And, moreover, the woman has been very recently sick with fever, so that will make her sudden slipping off seem more natural. Molly, do you want the thousand dollars?"

"Yes, I want the thousand dollars. But it is a dreadful price to pay."

"That is as you take it. The work is easily done."

"What is the woman's name?"

"Molly, if you don't do the work, you—"

"Bah! If you doubt me, let us have done with it. I am not anxious enough for the job to play at pledges before I know anything. What am I to gain, in heaven's name, by blowing on you?"

"Don't be put out, Molly. I am not afraid to trust you. The woman's name is Edith Somerby. She is not far from thirty years old, and lives in Rollington with her parents. I don't know if her father is living, Her mother was living the last I heard of them, though just recovering from a fever."

"A thousand dollars?"

"Yes, and a full new outfit for fall and winter wear."

"And you'll pay all expenses besides?"

"Yes."

"You'll give me the clothes, and money for my expenses to begin with, to be mine whether I succeed or not?"

"Yes, Molly, I'll do that. But it is understood that you shall do your best?"

"Of course."

"Then, of course you will succeed. You can find such garments as you want at some pawn-shop?"

"Yes."

"What will they cost?"

"Fifty dollars."

"That's a round sum, Molly, but you shall have it. I will make it a hundred for clothes and expenses, and when you report the work done, you shall have the thousand."

"I am to take your word for that?"

"Do you doubt me?"

"No. You trust me, and I shall trust you."

"Will you wait here half an hour, Molly?"

"For what?"

"We may as well have our plans arranged to-night as at any time. I will go and get the powder of which I spoke."

"I will wait."

Lyon put on his jockey cap, and went out, and in less than half an hour he was back again, and he brought with him a small box, in which were four neatly-folded papers, each containing a powder. He showed to Molly the papers, and explained to her that one of them was sufficient for the work, but he had got four, so as to guard against loss or accident. Molly took the box, and promised to keep it carefully.

There were many details to be entered into, concerning the passage by stage-coach, the finding of the house, and caution and watchfulness after reaching that point. Then he gave to Molly one hundred dollars, in notes of convenient denominations, for immediate use, and asked her if she understood.

"I understand it all," she said. "You couldn't make me understand it better if you should talk all night. And now I will drink some wine."

"And when the work is done you may write to me, without signature, that I am wanted at the 'Foul Anchor,'" said Lyon, as Molly lifted the bottle.

"I can't write myself, sir ; but I'll make you a sign."

And then Molly Dowd drank a full tumbler of the pure old wine.



CHAPTER XII.

A LETTER FROM OVER THE SEA.

The morning was cool and clear, and Molly Dowd started out in quest of the garments she needed for her journey. She was shrewd and bold, and able to make a good bargain; and, moreover, outcast as she was, she knew the quality of the goods offered her. Before noon she had selected and paid for a thorough outfit, and not quite thirty of her dollars had been expended. She returned to her poor chamber in the eastern by-way, and spread the garments out upon the bed. Thus far she had been in a sort of daze. Do not misunderstand this poor girl. She had not resolved that she would do murder. She had resolved upon nothing. She had taken Lyon Hargrave's hundred dollars, feeling that he could well spare it, and that she had earned it by listening to his proposition. As for the fearful work he had set her to do, she had not thought much of it. She had not been able to think clearly. A thousand dollars was in her estimation a fortune. It seemed to her she could live upon it comfortably while her poor life lasted. She had not yet dared to say to herself that she would earn that money. But she would get away from the city, and think. She would go out to Rollington, and see what manner of woman Lyon Hargrave feared. She could think more clearly out in the country. And

then she felt it would be a blessing to go away among the hills, and the trees, and the running brooks, where she had not been for long, long years.

In very truth, Molly Dowd had not wholly weighed in her mind Lyon Hargrave's proposition when he left her. "The money and the clothes to be mine whether I succeed or not," she repeated to herself. "And I told him I would succeed if I could. Well, we will see. Perhaps it will be easy—who knows? I never did such a thing. But there must be a first time for everything. A thousand dollars! Ah, me! it is a great sum."

Thus muttered Molly while she sat and looked at the new clothes. And then she stopped thinking for the time. The thoughts made her head swim.

She could not go over to Jersey to take the stage-coach until the morrow, and as it was now past dinner-time, and she had money, she thought she would go around to the "Foul Anchor" and get some chowder and wine. And she went, being careful to hide away her new clothes before she left her chamber.

"Ah, Molly!" cried the Cerberus, as she entered the place, "you're just in time, and you're in luck. You've got a letter from over the sea."

"A what, Jo?"

"A letter from over the sea, directed to Molly Dowd, at the 'Foul Anchor.' Look at it. Just look at the post-marks on it."

Molly took the letter, and gazed upon it in a state of sheer bewilderment.

"Who is it from?" she asked.

"I can't think of but one of your old chaps that's gone to sea, and that is Sugg Witkill."

Molly came nigh casting the letter from her indignantly, but a thought of her own restrained her. She could think of another—of one whom she had regarded

as a friend—of one who had befriended her many times, and she held the letter close, but spoke no word of her thought.

She had kept faith with Matt Bungo. To no human being had she breathed a word of that last interview with him in the little back parlor.

“Say, Molly, don’t you want me to read the letter for you?”

“No, Jo, I want you to give me some dinner. I want some chowder and some wine—just such wine as I drank last night.”

“Bless you, Molly, that wine’s worth two shillings the tumbler full.”

“Then let me have the full of a good tumbler to begin with.”

“Eh? You’re in funds, my lady?”

“I’ve got money enough to pay for what I order.”

Molly put the letter carefully away in her bosom and sat down, and without further question Jo furnished the repast she had ordered. She ate and drank, and then paid the bill. Jo wanted to talk more about the letter, but she did not choose to humor him.

“If it’s from Sugg,” she said, “I’ll let you know what he says.”

“If it isn’t from Sugg, who can it be from?”

“It may be from some grand officer. Who knows?”

And Jo laughed heartily as Molly hurried away.

On the corner of the by-way and South street Molly stopped and considered. She had told Lyon Hargrave that she could not write; and she might have added that she could not read. She could spell out and pronounce a few of the big words upon posters and police notices, but she could do little more. As for writing, it was to her as might have been a page of Egyptian hieroglyphics. Upon carefully studying the superscrip-

tion of the letter she could distinguish her own name, and though she could not decipher the post-marks upon it, yet the missive had the odor of the ocean upon it, and bore the marks of long travel.

After a time the girl started away as though she had an object in view. Up South to Pike, and thence into Cherry street, and ere long she reached a very respectable-looking house, at the door of which she rang the bell. The summons was answered by a shock-headed, coarse-faced woman, who demanded rather roughly to know what was wanted.

"I want to see Kate Arnot," said the applicant.

The woman looked Molly over from head to foot, as though considering whether to admit her.

"Look'e, my good woman," said Molly, not in the most amiable manner, and with a look and a nod that were significant, "I don't think you'd care to have me make any disturbance here, because I think I could stand that sort of thing better than this house could. Let me see Kate at once."

The woman drew back, and allowed the visitor to enter the hall, when the outer door was closed, shutting with a spring-lock. She then showed Molly into a small, poorly-furnished waiting-room, where there was nothing which could be stolen, and afterwards went in search of Kate.

In a little while Kate Arnot came, a girl not more than five-and-twenty, rather gaudily dressed, with face painted and powdered, and redolent of rose and jasmine. She did not shrink back when she saw her poorly-clad visitor, though there was a cloud upon her brow.

"Molly, is it you?"

"Yes, Katie, it is me ; but don't be fretted. I haven't come for help of money or nursing. I've got enough, thank fortune."

The cloud upon Kate's brow disappeared instantly.

"I have come, Kate, to get you to read a letter for me. You know I can't do it for myself."

"Come to my room, Molly, and I'll read it for you with pleasure."

And Kate led the way up to her chamber, where they closed the door and sat down.

"Before we break the seal," said Molly, producing the letter, "I would like to have you tell me that you will keep the contents as though it had been a letter to yourself. I don't want any promise from you, Kate. If you tell me, that will be enough."

"I give you my promise, nevertheless," returned Kate, pleasantly. "Now do you break the seal, and I will read it for you."

Molly accordingly loosened the letter from its seal, and then handed it to her companion, who examined the superscription before she opened it.

"Why, Molly, did you know that this was from India?"

"Yes. Jo told me that; and he wanted to read it for me, but I wouldn't let him. Open it, Kate, and tell me first who it is from."

Kate opened the letter and looked at the signature.

"Bless me! it's from Matt Bungo!" she exclaimed, with surprise.

"I thought so," said Molly.

"And have you known where Matt has been all these long months?"

"Yes, Kate; but I was under a promise not to tell."

"Old Matt!" said Kate, half to herself. "He was rough and tough, but he was true and loyal. He never went back on a friend who deserved help. And yet, in the eyes of the world, I suppose he was a bad man—a very bad man."

"I don't care for that," rejoined Molly, with decided emphasis. "He was always good to me."

"So he was good to me."

"And now, Kate, read it, please."

They drew their chairs together, and Kate Arnot, who was really a good reader, and possessed of a good education generally, spread open the letter, and read as follows. She read as she knew the writer would have written had he been able, making good grammar of the ungrammatical, and paying no heed to the bad spelling. We will give it as she read it :

"Calcutta, June 20th, 1841.

"MOLLY, MY TRUE OLD FRIEND : I am going to write to you, and let you know how I am getting on ; for I can't help thinking that it will please you to know that I am doing well. Do you know, Molly, that I think of you a good deal ? Somehow, in the old years, you come in as one of the pleasant things. God knows both you and I were bad enough, but I think we were true to each other. And then, again, I can't help thinking how much more unfortunate you are than I am. A man can easily lift himself up. The evil of the past don't stick to him as it does to a woman. The world don't call a man fallen after he has once more got upon his feet, but it won't let a fallen woman get upon her feet anyway. But, Molly, it won't always be so for those who really and truly want to get up. In the other world men and women will be judged by what's in the heart. So, Molly, keep your heart right."

"Bless me !" said Kate, resting the letter upon her knee, "if Matt isn't preaching."

"But it's true, what he says, isn't it ?" queried Molly, with moistened eyes.

"Yes, Molly, it is true, as true as gospel."

"Read the rest of it."

And Kate read on :

"Perhaps you won't believe me, Molly, but from the moment I last saw you in Jo Ragley's parlor down to this time I have been different from what I ever was before. I had a strong motive then to do a good deed, and I've been trying to do good ever since ; and I tell you, Molly, it is much better to be good than it is to be bad. Oh, it is so grand to feel that you can look everybody right square in the face ! And, Molly, it is something to be able to look up to Heaven and not be afraid of the light. The last evil thing I ever did, and one of the very worst, I did for Lyon Hargrave, the villain ! And he would have sold me, body and soul, the very next minute, had it been for his interest. And do you know, Molly, that I have more than once wondered, since Sugg and I are both gone, whether the villain would ever look after you to help him, for let me tell you there's hot water for him yet at Ingleside. At any rate, do you keep clear of him. I shall have a story to tell you when I get home, something that I dare not write. You remember what I hinted to you about Sugg ? It was more than true. But Sugg has met his reward. And I'll tell you about that, too, when I see you.

"And now, Molly, one word about myself, and the man I have learned to love as I never loved any other man, and that man is Horace Moore. When we got into Calcutta we found the ship *Xerxes* here, owned by our folks, and her captain and first mate sick with fever ; and both of them died. Captain Percy was put in command of the *Xerxes*, and Horace Moore was placed in command of the dear old *Speedwell*, and—I—Matt Bungo—am his third mate ! That is something, isn't it ? And Captain

Moore is learning me navigation, so that I can work out all kinds of reckonings ; and when I can do that I'll be fit for first mate. We shall start for home before long, and if we have good luck the rest of the way, it must be a prosperous voyage.

"And now, Molly, hold up till I get back ; and then, if you have a mind to stand up, I'll help you. Keep this letter to yourself ; or, if you have to get anybody to read it for you, tell that person to keep it. I can fancy you will steer for Katie Arnot. I don't fear to trust her. Above all, don't let word get to Lyon Hargrave that I am with Horace Moore. If you see that man, Molly, keep your eye on him, but don't let him get to windward of you. And keep an eye open for me, Molly, and look out for me when I get home, which won't be many months. MATT BUNGO."

For some moments after the letter was finished both the girls were silent. Tears were in Molly's eyes, and Kate's eyes were not dry. Kate was the first to speak :

"Dear old Matt ! I am glad he is doing so well. Goodness mercy ! Molly, suppose he should come home and marry you !"

Molly Dowd caught her breath, and grew pale as death, and then, in a moment more, flushed to the temples, and said :

"Don't, don't, Kate ! I tell you, it can never be ! And he an officer of a great ship ! Ah, the time for such hope left me long, long ago."

"Never mind, Molly ; but do as he says, and keep up the best heart you can."

"I'll do that."

"And Lyon Hargrave—what in the world is it all about ? I used to know Lyon ; and I've heard that he

had come into a big property up on the Hudson. What is it about him and Sugg Witkill?"

Molly had been considering this matter—considering how much she could tell to Kate Arnot—and her thoughts had been clear and quick.

"Really and truly," she answered, "I don't understand it. Matt says he will explain when he gets home. You've been good to me, Kate, and I ought to trust you. You'll keep sacred what I tell you?"

"As sacred as the grave, Molly."

"Then I know only this: Horace Moore had some connection with Ingleside, and Lyon Hargrave feared him so much that he wanted to do him harm; and when Moore had shipped as mate of the *Speedwell*, Hargrave got Sugg shipped to put him out of the way. Matt found this out, and from that moment he set himself to thwart Lyon Hargrave, and save Horace Moore. That is all I know, save what is in the letter."

"What a grand old fellow Matt is, to be sure!" cried Kate, feelingly. "And have you seen the villain, Lyon Hargrave, since?"

"I have seen him—that's all. But Matt needn't fear that the black-hearted man will ever pull wool over my eyes. You are real good, Kate, for reading my letter, and I hope I may be able to do you a good turn some time."

She took her letter as she spoke, and folded it, and put it into her bosom.

"I'm glad you came," said Kate, also rising; "for I have enjoyed the letter almost as much as you have; and be sure I'll keep all safe in my own breast."

"I know you will, Kate."

And the two women kissed each other, and separated.



CHAPTER XIII.

A BRAVE BATTLE.

Molly Dowd went back to her little upper chamber, and sat down and thought. It was a new and strange work for her—this deep thinking ; but she was equal to the emergency, though sometimes thoughts conflicted, and jostled her brain till she was well nigh distracted. But, thanks to the better instincts of her heart, the right thoughts held their way uppermost in the end. She sat a long half hour without moving—sat with her head bowed upon her hand—sat until the day had gone, and the shadows were thick over the city. Then she started up, as from a dream, and was surprised to find it dark. She lighted a candle, and after standing awhile in its struggling light, she drew the letter from her bosom and pressed it to her lips.

“Dear old Matt !” she murmured, in firm, resolute tones, “you shall not be alone in doing good. How wonderful it is ! The same hand that opened the way to you has opened it to me. Heaven bless the dear letter, and bless the writer !”

And she kissed the sea-stained missive again, and again put it away in her bosom.

Then she drew her shawl over her head, and went forth to the “Foul Anchor.” The drinkers of the night

had begun to assemble, and she went around through the dark archway, and rang the bell at the rear door.

"It's me, Jo,—Molly."

Jo opened the door and admitted her to the little parlor.

"Bless me, Molly, you look like a woman of business."

Aye, even the Cerberus of that Gehenna, with his bleared eyes, could see the new look upon the woman's face.

"What's up?" he asked, after she had taken a seat.

"Nothing that can concern you, Jo, if I may say so."

"And who was the letter from, Molly? Was it Sugg?"

"No, it was not from Sugg."

"Who, then?"

"It was as I told you, Jo, honestly and truly. It was from the mate of a ship; and it was for me alone. If you ask me any more questions I shall lie to you; and I don't want to lie if I can help it."

"Well, you *are* a rum 'un! But have your own way. I won't bother you."

"Thank you, Jo. And now I want some stewed oysters, and a bottle of that same wine."

"Not a bottle?"

"I said—a bottle."

"But it's worth ten shillings."

"Then I'll pay you ten shillings. Bring it to me."

With a prolonged whistle Jo left the apartment, and when he had cooked the oysters, he brought them in, with the wine; and, as usual, he brought two glasses.

"D'ye expect company, Molly?"

"No, unless you call yourself company."

"That's good."

"You may drink with me, Jo."

"Thank you." And Jo filled the two glasses.

Molly took hers, and said, in tones such as were not often heard from such lips :

"Here's hoping that both you and I may know more good in the time to come, Jo, than we have ever known."

"Good ! I like that," said Jo. And he swallowed the wine with a relish. "And now, old gal, ring if you want anything more. And I don't mind drinking another toast before the bottle is empty."

And the Cerberus went away, leaving his guest to eat and drink in peace.

Molly eat the oysters, and drank more of the wine, and when she had done, she pulled the frayed bell-cord, which summons Jo quickly answered, for he had helpers in the front shop.

The girl asked for her bill. The amount was stated, and she paid it.

"Have you drunk all the wine, Molly."

"No. I am going to drink to your toast now, Jo, and I want enough left for me to drink another afterwards."

Jo held the bottle up to the hanging lamp, and measured the contents with his eye. Then he poured some into his own glass, and some into Molly's, leaving a good fair glass behind.

"Now, Jo, for your toast."

"Well, Molly, here's luck."

"That's good, Jo. I'll drink to it."

They both drank, and then Molly took up the bottle, and poured the remainder of the wine into her glass. She held it up to the light, and looked into its amber depths. The expression upon her face was strange, and Jo watched her curiously. By and by she went to the stove, and lifted the cover aside, and then, in a tiny, trickling stream, she poured the wine out upon the dead coals. Jo looked on in blank amazement, but there was

such calm method in the movement that he did not interfere. But when it had been done he cried :

“In mercy’s name, what did you do that for?”

Molly turned back to the table, and set her glass down, bottom upward.

“Jo,” she said, with solemn seriousness, “it is my last drop for a time. I don’t know what may come in the future. I may be driven down lower than ever; but I’m going to try and stand. I think I shall have your good wishes.”

“That you will, Molly. But—”

“That’ll do, Jo. I must go now. You won’t speak of this; because if I fail and fall, I don’t want to be laughed at.”

“Mum’s the word. You may depend upon me.”

“Good-night, Jo. I hope you may prosper in a good way. You’ve been always kind to me.”

“Molly! what in the name of—”

“Hush! Good-night.”

“Good-night; and may luck go with you, Molly.”

“Well, I’m blamed!” muttered Jo, after she had gone, “if here ain’t a go. What has possessed the girl? Ah! it’s Lyon Hargrave! Mercy, I hope she isn’t going to trust that man! If she does, Heaven help her!”

Molly Dowd hurried back to her chamber, and to bed. She had done all her thinking, and had arranged all her plans. And she slept soundly. With the first break of the morning she was up, and having treated herself to a good bath, she donned her new garments, and fixed her hair neatly. She hardly recognized the reflection from her little mirror; and a momentary flush crept up into her face as she told herself that she was not bad-looking, after all.

And another, looking at her, might have told her that she was far from bad-looking. Aye, could the

stamp of suffering have been removed from her face, she might have been called handsome.

A small traveling-bag contained all that she had to carry, and having packed this, and put on her bonnet and shawl, she was ready to set forth. She had no need to see her landlord. She had paid her rent in advance, and was under no obligations. She got her breakfast at a small eating-house, over on Washington street, and then made her way to the Jersey side, where she found the stage-coach she was to take, and secured her seat. Her first day's ride brought her to Goshen, and upon inquiring of the landlord at the inn where she was to stop, she found that she was still thirty miles from her destination.

That evening Molly felt nervous and uncomfortable, and she slept but little through the night. In the morning a pot of strong coffee made her feel better, and later she took the stage for the post-village next adjoining Rollington, which she reached at noon. At the inn in this place she called for dinner, but eat very little. She asked for coffee, and when that was served she drank it freely.

After dinner she asked the host if he knew a family of the name of Somerby, in Rollington.

He did. He knew two families of that name. One lived in the village, and kept a store, and the other lived on a farm.

It was the farm that the wayfarer sought.

The host told her it was about five miles distant, and gave her such directions that she could not miss it.

Late in the afternoon Molly set forth on foot, and in the edge of the evening she reached the farmer's house—a tidy, substantial dwelling, with thrifty looking outbuildings. She crept to the door, and plied the knocker.

There was no need that Molly Dowd should plead sickness to enlist sympathy. She had used the last of her strength in reaching the house, and as she stood upon the broad stone step her frame shook, and her face was pale and haggard.

A young woman came to the door, a woman of thirty, or thereabouts, whose face was pleasant and kind, and whose brown eyes were full of warm and tender love-light.

"In mercy's name, good woman, can you give me rest and shelter?" asked the wayfarer, tottering.

"Of course we can," was the hearty response. And the brown-eyed woman took the sufferer by the arm, and led her into the house, led her into a comfortable sitting-room, where sat an elderly lady who seemed to be just recovering from sickness, and a girl younger than she who had come to the door.

"It is no sickness that you need fear," said the newcomer, as she observed a look of concern upon the face of the younger girl. "I am only worn and faint and broken. If you will let me rest here I will pay you."

"Hush, poor child! God's mercy is not strained beneath this roof. Rest, and be at peace."

The wayfarer looked up into the large, clear brown eyes of the speaker, and her own eyes filled until the tears ran down her hollow cheeks in a stream, and she bowed her head upon her hands, and sobbed aloud.

"Poor soul!" And she of the brown eyes bent over and kissed the sufferer upon the brow.

The wayfarer started, and looked up through her tears.

"What is your name?" she asked.

"EDITH SOMERBY."

A film seemed to come over the eyes of the stranger, and she reeled like one dazed and dizzy.

"Poor girl," said Edith, supporting her, "will you go and lie down? You are very weak."

"Yes, Miss Somerby. If you will give me some out-of-the-way corner, where I shall not be too much of an intruder."

"Come with me."

And Edith led the stranger to a small bed-room, where was a soft, comfortable bed, and bade her rest and feel at home. And then she added :

"You have asked my name. May I know yours?"

"Yes. My name is Molly Dowd."

"Mary, is it?"

"I was never called Mary, that I can remember. Call me Molly, if you please ; and let it be Molly that gets better under this roof, Heaven bless and protect it, and all that it covers !"

And Molly's eyes streamed again. And Edith spoke words of cheer and comfort.

Would Molly have anything to eat ?

No she could not eat ; but she would like a cup of strong tea.

And Edith went away, and made the tea, and brought it in ; and Molly drank two full cups of it, after which she lay down, and was left to rest.

The family at the farmhouse consisted of the widowed mother and four children. Two grown-up boys, aged twenty-two and twenty-six, respectively, and two daughters, aged twenty and thirty-one. Of these Edith was the oldest, and was really at the head of the household. A heavy mortgage which had rested upon the farm at her father's death she had paid off entirely from her own earnings, and most of the business of the place was in her hands to manage. And she was not only equal to the task, but her brothers preferred that it

should be so. They were a happy, loving, and contented family.

When the family had assembled for the evening Edith told her brothers of the coming of the wayfarer, and it was cheerfully agreed that she should do as she pleased in the matter.

In the little bedroom Molly Dowd tossed and turned in restless pain ; but by and by she heard a light step at the door, and in a moment she was quiet. Edith came in, and asked her how she was.

"I think I shall rest," was Molly's answer, in a whisper.

"Can I do anything for you? Do not be afraid to ask."

"If I could have a bowl of cold tea by my bedside."

Edith went out and prepared the tea, and brought it in, a large bowl full. And the wayfarer said she could do nothing more.

O ! it was agony, not the agony of twinging pain, but the agony of entire unrest. Every nerve was in arms, and clamoring for the old fire of the bygone times. Molly knew too well what it meant, but she did not faint. She would conquer or die, that is, if she could have the help of kindness. It was a long and dreary and wretched night.

Early in the morning Edith came in, cheerful and smiling ; but she stopped, fear-stricken, when she saw the hollow cheeks, the staring eyes, and the pain-marked face before her. Molly observed, and quickly sat up in bed, and stretched forth her hands. She had resolved to do a brave thing.

"Miss Somerby—Edith," she said, "be not alarmed. Sit down here by my side, not too near, and let me tell you the truth. You may spurn me from you when you have heard—you may cast me forth from your house—but you shall know."

"Tell me," said Edith, sitting down near enough to take one of the quivering, shaking hands.

"Dear angel," responded the sufferer, "for years I have almost lived upon that fire which consumes both body and soul. This is Saturday morning?"

"Yes."

"Since Wednesday night I have not drank a drop of spirit. On that night I turned my glass upside down, and said if I could find help I would drink no more. But, oh! I did not know the pain that was to come. And yet I do not regret, I do not falter. If you ask me what led to this last step, I shall tell you when I am stronger—when I shall have something else to tell you. Can you still be kind to me?"

"Dear soul! yes."

"If I should tell you I had been outcast, very, very low, what then?"

"Tell me that you wish henceforth to be better and happier, and I will care for you as I would for my own dear sister."

"Edith—blessed one!—it is my soul's most earnest desire. Help, oh, help, and you shall not regret it!"

Edith put her arm around the neck of the petitioner, and drew her head upon her bosom.

"Poor child! You shall be saved if my help can accomplish it. I understand all that is necessary, so let us say no more upon the subject of the past until you are stronger. Let us be cheerful, if we can. The best of us need help sometimes. And now, Mary—"

"Molly, if you please."

"Well, Molly," said Edith, with a smile, resuming her seat, "the first thing for us to do is to send for the doctor. Our family physician is near at hand, and he is a good, kind man. He can help you."

"If you think he can help me—"

"I am sure he can."

"I must pay him."

"As you please about that."

"I shall tell him the whole truth—or, you may. I would rather you did it, Miss Somerby."

"Edith, if you please."

"Good, blessed Edith!"

So Edith went out, and sent one of her brothers away for the doctor, and at the end of an hour the man of medicine was at hand. He was, fortunately, a man of practical common-sense, and when he had heard from Edith just what the case was, he knew how to handle it. He said to the patient, when he had sat by her side awhile, and tested her courage :

"I shall not force nature to succumb to drowsy drugs. I could give you easy sleep in an hour, but it would not benefit you. You would only awaken to the old pain. Will you, with my help, fight it out bravely?"

"Yes, sir, I will fight it out."

"Then your suffering shall not be long."

And she did fight it out; and all were surprised at the speedy conquest, and at the rapid improvement after the enemy had been put under foot. In one week from the day of the doctor's coming her nerves were strong and steady, and her appetite was good. She gained in flesh, and the incoming of pure blood began to give color to her filling cheeks. In two weeks she was better in health, and far better in looks, than she had been before for years. She looked into the mirror now, and a secret joy shone in her eyes as she found a face reflected which was not unhandsome—a face fair and flushed, with eyes clear and bright, and the curling hair glossy and attractive. Was she think-

ing of the mate of the noble ship, whose letter she carried even now in her bosom? Who shall say?

And during all this time Edith had been her constant and untiring attendant, had been, in short, the sister as she had promised.

One day, when she had become strong and well, Molly was unusually thoughtful, and during the afternoon Edith asked her what occupied her thoughts.

Molly looked up with a start. At length she said:

"Edith, I have been beneath your roof almost three weeks. Have I gained your confidence?"

Edith went over and kissed the girl upon the cheek, and then answered:

"You have won our confidence and our love."

"Bless you, Edith. This evening, when we can be alone, I will tell you of what I have been thinking to-day. It is of that something else which I hinted at when I told you the truth of my own sad life. Wait until evening, and you shall know."



CHAPTER XIV.

A BREAK IN THE SHADOWS.

Night had settled down upon valley and hill-side, and all in the farm-house, save Edith and Molly, were in bed. The two women sat in the little work-room, where a fire of well-seasoned hickory wood burned in an old-fashioned open fire-place. There had been a long silence. Edith was knitting composedly, while her companion had been for some time restless and uneasy. At length the latter spoke :

“Edith !”

Edith laid aside her work and looked up with a pleasant nod of recognition.

“Do you know, Edith, that I am happier than I have ever been before in my life ? I received a letter once, from a friend far over the sea. He had been a bad man, but something had started him up, just as something started me, and he had been trying to do good instead of doing evil ; and he wrote to me how grand it was to be able to stand up in the broad light and not be afraid. I shall show you the letter some time, Edith. That letter turned me. I was on the turning-point when it came, but I had not turned. That set me in the better way, and I said to an old associate, when I turned my glass bottom-side up, that I didn’t know

what might come in the future, I might be driven down lower than I had ever been, but I was going to try to stand. And, Oh, how great and grand is the change. I think, I hope, I shall keep my feet."

"Dear child," said Edith, with moistening eyes, "I feel sure you will stand. Do not doubt your own strength. If you look constantly to God, you cannot fail. Your trust and confidence in the Infinite Father of all mercies will strengthen you, and inspire you with trust and confidence in the better part of yourself."

"I think I understand, and I shall not forget."

After this a long silence ensued, which was, as before, broken by Molly:

"Edith, I told you I had something to say to you. I have been waiting until I got strong, and until your mother got strong; but, now that the time has come, I don't know where to begin. It is a strange thing of which I must speak. But, dear Edith, I believe it will not make you unhappy."

"Go on," said Edith, with sudden interest. "Let me know in your own best way. Commence where you will."

Molly bowed her head, and seemed to be summoning strength. Finally she looked up with the light of decision upon her face.

"Edith, have you any objections to telling me the story of Horace Moore and Lyon Hargrave?"

The brown eyes opened wide, and the mistress of the farm-house was evidently startled.

"Ask me no questions yet, Edith. I have a reason for my request. I know Lyon Hargrave."

After a pause, Edith commenced and told the story of Horace Moore; and then she told of Lyon. She told of the death of Walter Hargrave, and of the incoming of his nephew to Ingleside, and of the outgoing of Horace.

She told of what she knew, only shadowing forth unwittingly what she suspected. But her listener was quick to catch the latter.

"And is there not a lady in the case?" Molly asked.

"Yes." And Edith told the story of Lily Merton.

"And I understand," she added, "that in the firm belief that Horace is dead, and pressed thereto by her father, over whom Lyon Hargrave holds the suspended weight of a heavy debt, she has consented to become Hargrave's wife. I should have gone to her ere this, but sickness has prevented. I shall go soon, now, however, leaving you in my place, Molly, while I am gone."

"Do you think Horace Moore is dead?" Molly asked, dreamily, as though her thoughts were turned inward.

"I know not what to think now. At first I did not believe it. I did not believe the truth of the announcement in the newspapers, for I received a letter from Horace in which he spoke of the death of the officers of the ship *Xerxes*."

"What was the date of that letter?"

"The second day of June, last."

"Is the day set for Lily Merton's marriage with Lyon Hargrave?"

"Christmas-time, not sooner."

Molly breathed more freely. When she spoke again her voice was low and tremulous, and at the beginning her frame quivered perceptibly.

"Edith," she said, "I will tell you now. Listen to me: Three weeks ago, or a little more—it was on Tuesday, I think, Lyon Hargrave came to me in New York. He thought I was wholly bad. He judged my heart by his own. He thought what he would do for money I would do. I must tell you here, Edith, that I cast the past of evil away. I cannot now remember how far I promised Lyon Hargrave to be secret. I was

dazed and confounded, and my mind was not clear. But it has been clear since, and I believe that the thing which I now do is right and just before Heaven. I think I do but my sacred duty."

"Lyon Hargrave came to me, and offered me a thousand dollars if I would come to Rollington, and—and—"

"Molly! What?" cried Edith, catching her arm.

"Do a foul murder! He gave me the fatal, deadly poison, which I was to give to—EDITH SOMERBY!"

"Oh, my soul!"

"But, dear Edith, as true as Heaven, you were never in danger from me, though at first I did not think to betray Lyon Hargrave. I took from him the money for my expenses, which was to be mine whether the work was done or not. I wanted to come out into the country; and I had a curiosity to see you. If there was wrong in what I thought, good has come of it. Had I refused Lyon point-blank, he would have attacked you some other way. After he had left me, it was on the next day, I received a letter from a great way off—the letter I told you of; and when I had heard that letter read I not only determined to save and serve you, but I determined, if I could, to begin a better life. Your letter, Edith, was written very early in June. This was written almost three weeks later. You may read it."

And Molly drew the letter from her bosom, and gave it to her friend.

With deep emotion, with many startling ejaculations, and with now and then a question, Edith read the letter.

"Molly," she cried, when she had finished it, "Horace Moore lives!"

"Aye," answered Molly, "and must be well on his way home ere this."

Edith pressed her hand to her brow while she collected

her thoughts. She had need to think clearly now. At length :

"Molly, what of this man called Sugg? Who is he?"

"Dear Edith, let me tell you so that you will understand. By putting this and that together I have got at the truth. I knew both Sugg and Matt; and I knew Lyon Hargrave; and when Lyon wanted to find Sugg Witkill, that is his name, he got me to hunt him up. He hired Sugg to ship on board the *Speedwell*, and I now know that he was hired to put Horace Moore out of the way. Through me Matt Bungo learned that Sugg had shipped, and that Lyon Hargrave had hired him. Matt suspected at once the mischief, and he, brave old Matt! determined to save Horace Moore if he could, for Horace had been a friend to him. So he, too, shipped on board the *Speedwell*, and we can see, from his letter, that he has conquered. But we shall know all when he gets home."

Edith had not listened to this recital in silence, though she was silent for a time after it was concluded.

"Light begins to break in upon me," she said, at length. "I now know why I have received no answer from Lily. Lyon Hargrave has an emissary in the post-office at Oxington. With his position and his money he could easily do that. The office is small, and the postmaster is old. I sent my letter to Lily four weeks ago. Hargrave got it. And so, also, has he detained the letters which have come for Lily from over the sea. I must go to Oxington at once! I will know all."

"You must be very careful, Edith. You know not with what a villain you have to deal."

"I know him, Molly, and I will for the present avoid him."

"Dear Edith, if you do not shrink from such a thing,

I would say to you, disguise yourself before you come within the possibility of that man's seeing you."

"I will do it, Molly. I should do it for more reasons than one."

After this the letter from Matt Bungo was re-read, and then followed many questions and answers, and much consultation; and finally the course of action for the immediate future was marked out. It was past midnight when Edith Somerby drew the poor waif to her bosom, and said:

"Dear Molly, Heaven has sent you to do this good work; and in the doing of it all the stain of the past may be washed away! This home is yours while you please to stay, and you shall be to me a sister. God bless and keep you!"

On the following morning Edith brought a soiled piece of paper, the unwritten part of an old letter, and got her younger brother to write upon it as follows:

"ROLLINGTON, *October* — 1841.

"MR. LYON HARGRAVE: E. S. has gone away to visit a sick friend. I shall stay here till she comes back."

There was no signature, and having folded this in a half-sheet of cleaner paper, and sealed it, the brother, in his rough hand, superscribed it, and took it to the post-office.

After breakfast Edith put on one of her mother's faded silk dresses, and also put on a lace cap, with her own hair combed back, and a partial periwig of gray hair in front, visible under the frill of the cap. A pair of green spectacles completed a metamorphosis so complete that even her brothers did not recognize her until she had spoken and smiled. In explanation to

the family she said that she must go to Ingleside to perform a sacred duty, and she did not wish to be recognized by Lyon Hargrave. They had heard enough of affairs at Ingleside not to wonder at this, and they promised secrecy without asking many questions.

Molly was the last of whom Edith took leave at the house.

"You will help my mother and sister while I am away, Molly?"

"You know I will, dear Edith."

"Yes, I know. God keep and bless you. Good-bye!"

They exchanged kisses, and then Edith entered the wagon, in which her brother was to drive her some distance on her journey.

It was on Tuesday evening, the second day of November, that Adolphus brought a letter up to Ingleside for the master. Lyon looked at the post-mark, and then nodded to the young man that he might retire. When alone he broke the seal and read. With an oath he threw the letter into the fire. And with another oath he muttered:

"What is she up to? She must have lagged on the way. We'll wait and see. I don't think Molly Dowd has a soft spot in her heart that can turn her from that thousand dollars."

And on the afternoon of this same day, a woman in faded silk and mob-cap, with gray hair and green spectacles, called at the post-office, and asked of the young man in attendance, if there was a letter for Sarah Dwindleton.

There was no such letter.

Then the woman went to the rear part of the store, where Mr. Hardy was at his desk, and bought of

him a few small articles, chatting the while as though she knew him.

"I see you have a new clerk since I was last here," she said, naturally.

"Yes'm."

"His countenance has a familiar look to me. Where have I seen him?"

"I couldn't tell you, ma'am. He's a young college student—a friend of Mr. Hargrave's—that I took in to help him on with his studies."

"Ah, I see. The young 'squire, that is, Lyon Hargrave, got him the situation?"

"Yes'm."

"Mr. Hargrave is very considerate, I am sure. Good-day, sir."

"Good-day, ma'am."

And Mr. Hardy returned to his desk, while the lady left the store, giving a keen, searching glance at the young postal-clerk as she passed him.

Later, on this afternoon, Lily Merton was informed by Mary Carter that an old lady wished to see her in the sitting-room.

Lily went down, and found the woman in the faded silk gown and mob-cap.

"This is Miss Merton?" said the visitor, rising stiffly.

"It is, madam."

"Miss Merton, when you know my business I am sure you will pardon my intrusion. I would like to speak with you in private."

"We can be private here."

"I should prefer to speak with you in your own chamber. Do not refuse me."

There was a persuasiveness in the woman's manner which Lily could not resist; and, moreover, there was

a winning sound in the music of her voice. She hesitated but for a moment, and then bade her visitor follow her.

Arrived in the comfortable chamber, Lily closed the door ; but this did not satisfy the other, who turned the key in the lock. The young girl might have been alarmed had time been given her to realize the situation, but no sooner had the visitor locked the door than she turned and tore off the mob-cap and the false hair, and removed the green spectacles.

"Edith !"

"Hush ! Yes, Lily, it is Edith. Oh, my poor child !"

And Lily was in her arms in a moment, strained to the breast of her true and faithful friend.

"Oh, Edith ! bless you for coming. My dear Edith ! Oh, how glad I am !"

They sat down, side by side, and hand in hand, and by and by, after more words of love, Lily said :

"I have wondered, Edith, why you did not write to me ; why, at least, you did not answer my letter."

"I received no letter from you, dear child."

"I wrote, a month ago, and directed it to Rollington."

"And I wrote to you, Lily—but we will come to that by and by. Tell me, now, the nature of your engagement to Lyon Hargrave. Be not afraid, darling," added Edith, as the stricken girl paled and shuddered. "I have come to help you if I can. Tell me all."

And then Lily told the whole story of the power which Lyon had gained over her father, and how it had been brought to bear upon her.

"When I could bear it no longer," she went on, "I told my father that when one year should have elapsed from the departure of Horace, if both he and Lyon then demanded it, I would become Lyon's wife."

"If both your father and Lyon should demand it at the end of the year?"

"Yes."

"And that year is not up until the last of December?"

"On the twenty-third."

"Take heart, Lily, and take hope."

"Edith!"

"Hush! Nerve yourself for a battle, dear child. Tell me if you are strong?"

"Oh, yes! What is it?"

"Mark me, Lily: What may have happened since the closing of the month of June we cannot tell; but I can swear to you that the item in the newspapers, announcing the death of Horace Moore, was false."

Lily Merton gazed up with staring look, and gasped for breath. She clutched Edith's arm, quivering like an aspen.

"I have seen a letter, Lily, written more than six weeks after the date of the reported death by an officer of Horace's ship. The captain and mate of the ship *Xerxes* had died, and Captain Percy had been put in command of that ship, while Horace had been promoted to the command of the *Speedwell*."

"Oh, Edith!"

"Hush, darling. Lay your head here upon my bosom! so. Now listen patiently. I did not get your letter, and you did not get mine, because Lyon Hargrave has his own base tool in the post-office. Hush! And letters which have come from Horace, be sure, have been stolen away and delivered at Ingleside. Oh, Lily, it is a base, wicked plot, from beginning to end. And the demon is even now plotting to destroy me; and that is why I came to you in such a masquerade. But, if you can be strong and brave, we will conquer. As I

live, I believe that Horace will come back to us, safe and sound. If he does not arrive before the allotted year is up, we must contrive to put the marriage off. We can do it easily."

After a little time Lily grew calm and collected, and her native strength, her queenly strength and pride, came back to her. Her eyes shone as they had not shone before since her fateful promise to her father.

And then Edith told to her the whole story, from beginning to end, as she knew it. She told of Molly Dowd, and of Matt Bungo's letter, and of Sugg Witkill, and how, thus far, the demon of Ingleside had been thwarted, without yet knowing it, at every step. And she also told what she had discovered at the post-office.

"I knew it was my letter to you, Lily, that had alarmed Lyon Hargrave to seek my life. I knew he must have intercepted it. I showed my mind and my knowledge in it very plainly."

And then the twain laid their plans, and Lily was sure she could act her part without betraying herself.

After this a season of sweet, refreshing converse, and the true friends separated.

A few days after this Lyon Hargrave was most agreeably surprised. Lily met him, and greeted him in a friendly manner. And this she continued to do whenever he called. She did not treat him yet as a lover, but she ceased to be cold and distant, and sometimes she smiled in his presence.

"Score the game for me!" cried Lyon, to himself, as he walked forth one evening from Mr. Merton's house. "The proud beauty has given in at last!"

And he went home, and drank some brandy, and then beat Adolphus three games at billiards,



CHAPTER XV.

MATT'S FINAL REVELATION.

The ship *Speedwell* dropped a single anchor at Cape Town, and remained long enough to obtain a few needed supplies. After doubling the southern capes Captain Percy called his crew aft one pleasant day, and asked them, kindly, and with parental concern, if they had ever felt a regret at the loss of Grover and Witkill and their companions. The answer was quick and hearty.

"And now, my men," said Percy, "I want you to take this lesson to heart. Think how much better off you are to-day in every way, how much better, and how much happier, than you would have been had your hands been dipped in the blood of mutiny. Since that night you have pleased me, and from this time I give you back my entire confidence. Let the one false step be forgotten."

The men gave their captain and mates three hearty cheers, and then went to their stations ; and thenceforth the crew of the ship was a model of harmony and excellence.

When the *Speedwell* cast her anchors in the river Hoogly it was found that only two ships had ever made the passage from America so quickly. She had been blessed

with fair winds in the Indian Ocean, and she had been managed by competent masters.

In Diamond Harbor, on his arrival, Percy found the ship *Xerxes*, just in from Canton—a ship belonging to the owners of the *Speedwell*,—and shortly afterward her captain and first mate died of fever. The agent and the underwriters conferred with Captain Percy, and asked him what should be done. The *Xerxes* was a heavy ship, and was to return home with a valuable cargo. Had he an officer competent to take charge of the *Speedwell*?

“Yes, gentlemen,” he answered, promptly. “Mr. Moore is capable in every way.”

“And entirely trustworthy?”

“Never a more true and trusty man walked a deck.”

And so it came to pass that John Percy went to the command of the *Xerxes*, while Horace Moore was elevated to the command of the *Speedwell*. William Lander was his first mate, Tom Martin his second, and Matt Bungo was installed as third mate. Matt was proud of the position, and not a man below him grumbled at his elevation.

On the first of August, with an amply sufficient crew, and with a full and valuable cargo, the *Speedwell* set sail for home. The men had already learned to love their new commander, and their obedience was ready and cheerful.

“Matt,” said the captain, one day, to his third mate, who was unusually moody and thoughtful, “what have you upon your mind? There is something in which I have an interest.”

“Captain Moore, will you wait until we snuff the trades of the Atlantic? Wait till then, and I’ll tell you.”

“All right, Matt.”

At Cape Town the ship stopped again, and upon going on shore, Horace saw a boat at the landing which

he quickly recognized as the boat which had once hung at the stern-davits of the *Speedwell*, and in which the mutineers had been set adrift. He and Matt were together, and they proceeded to investigate, and, at length, from an officer of quarantine, they learned the particulars.

Some months before, a Dutch brig had picked up the boat at sea, with seven men in it, who said their own vessel had sprung a leak and gone down. These men had been taken on board the brig, and fed and clothed, and in return for the kindness shown them they had arisen in mutiny, and tried to capture the vessel. But the Dutchman had not been caught napping. The villains had been overcome, four of them had been shot down at the time of the attack, and the other three had been hanged.

And both Horace Moore and Matt Bungo returned to their ship with a feeling of great relief. Horace was rid forever of an enemy ; and, moreover, he was glad to know that the villains had met their death at other hands than his. As for the death of Philip Grover, he had but done his duty to his ship, to his comrades, and to the world.

The *Speedwell* had crossed the Southern tropic, and entered the South-east trade-winds, and the crew had little to do but keep the ship on her course.

One evening, while Lander had the deck, and while Martin was sound asleep in his berth, Matt Bungo came into the cabin, where the captain was reading, and sat down at the table. Horace looked up, and observed that his mate's face wore an unusual expression.

"How now, Matt? Have you come to give me the secret you have held so long?"

"Yes, captain," replied Matt, breathing heavily. "I have come to tell you all I have to tell ; and when it is

told you will acknowledge that to have known it before would only have made you restless and yearning to no purpose. And one thing more, captain, I want you to give me your promise that you won't think less of me when I have told it."

"My true friend, how can I think less of the man to whom I owe my life?"

"I know, sir, but still I have done some very bad things in my day."

"And are resolved to do no more of them?" said Horace, cheerfully and feelingly.

"Never again, sir, while I have sense and reason!" answered Matt, grandly.

"Then go on and tell me your story, and I give you my promise that I will not blame you for anything. Let it be what it may, your service of the months last past shall wipe out all bitterness."

"Ah, sir, you don't forget that you first saved my life. When I remember that, I sometimes feel unworthy to look you in the face."

"Then never feel so again, Matt. Now go on. I am very anxious."

Matt drew his chair nearer, and rested an arm upon the table, and when he commenced speaking his voice was low and husky.

"In December last, sir, Sugg Witkill and I were stopping at a doggery on South street, in New York. One night, early in the month, Lyon Hargrave found us, and asked us if we would do a job for him. He would pay us well. We were to follow him up the river, and, at a proper time, commit a burglary, that was all. We were both dead broke at the time, and agreed to his proposition. He went back the next morning, leaving us money enough for expenses, and we followed the day after. You see, sir, we had known Lyon before. He

has kept strange company in his life. We found him at an out-of-the-way place in Oxington, and he kept us hidden there two days. On the night of the third day he called us to him, and told us the time had come for our work. And this it was:

"His uncle, Walter Hargrave, had been sick and failing, and that night had died. Had the old man died without leaving a will, Lyon would have been his sole heir; but a will had been left in favor of another party—"

"That party, Matt—"

"Was Horace Moore."

"Go on."

"Walter Hargrave was dead, and Lawyer Merton had gone up to Ingleside to attend to any business that might be required at his hands. Lyon had already made a friend of the lawyer, and with his, the lawyer's, consent, he got a half-witted fellow appointed to watch with the corpse that night; and before the watcher went to his post Lyon contrived to give him a glass of wine with a moderate dose of laudanum in it. It was almost eleven o'clock at night when we sat down at a table with Lyon, and he spread out an exact plan of the house at Ingleside, and a separate plan of the library; and he pointed out to us where the old oaken cabinet was, and told us of the drawer in which lay the will. He had taken impressions of all the keys, and had made duplicates, which he gave us; and we were to go and get that will, and bring it to him. We wondered why he did not do the work himself, and thus keep all in his own breast; but he explained to us that he must be able to prove that he had not been near Ingleside alone after the death of his uncle. In truth, I don't believe he dared to go and steal the will with the dead body of the old man so near.

"Sugg and I studied the plans until we had them by heart, and then we took the false keys, and set out."

"It was on Wednesday night, December ninth?" said Horace, breathlessly.

"I think so," answered Matt. "At any rate, it was on the night of Walter Hargrave's death."

"We went into the yard at Ingleside by the back way, and saw a light in one of the rear rooms, and also saw that somebody, a man and a woman we found it to be, was up. We waited until they had gone, and then we entered the house by help of our keys. We found the library, and we found the watcher fast asleep. We found the cabinet, which Mr. Merton had locked up all tight, but with the false keys we opened it without difficulty. We had a dark lantern with us, and there was a lamp burning in the next room—the room in which lay the dead body of the old man. It wasn't pleasant for me, I assure you, and more than once I wished I was out of the job. It was the first time I had ever lent a hand to rob a dead man; and every noise I heard, even to the snapping of the fire that smouldered in the open fireplace of the library, frightened me.

"We opened the doors of the old cabinet, and unlocked the drawer which had been marked out for us. There were quite a number of papers in there, and among them we found the will. We opened it to make sure, we read the beginning, and read the names, and saw the seal, and then I held it while Sugg locked up the drawer and the doors. This had just been done when I heard a door open, and felt a draft of cold air strike me. Sugg and I turned at the same moment. Oh, sir! the cold shivers run through me now as I think of it."

And Matt Bungo quaked from head to foot as he spoke. Horace reached out and touched him upon the

arm. He was strangely excited, and his breath came hard and quick.

"Go on, Matt."

"Sugg and I turned together, sir, and we saw a sight that for the moment rooted us where we were. I dropped the will, and stood shivering. It was a spectre, sir, if ever there was such a thing, a female form, tall and erect, with a winding-sheet enveloping her from head to foot, with face like pale marble, and great, staring, fiery eyes. The air grew dreadfully cold as she came into the room; and she came on, slowly and solemnly, without appearing to notice us in the least. At length Sugg made a rush for the opposite door, by which we had entered, and I followed him, and we did not stop until we had got half-way down to the village.

"When we did stop, we took breath and considered. We believed we had seen a spectre. Had it been a mortal woman, she would have been startled upon seeing two such men as us in that place, for she looked straight at us with her terrible eyes, but she was not moved an atom. What should we tell Lyon Hargrave? We finally agreed that we would tell him exactly how we had been frightened, and that the will had been thrown into the fire and burned up.

"It was almost two o'clock when we got back to the out-of-the-way house, and we found Lyon up and waiting for us. We told him our story, and he swore that we had been drunk, and frightened at our own shadows. We did not urge our story, only we told him we had thrown the will upon the fire, and we wanted him to pay us, and let us go. After fuming and fretting a long time he paid us half of the promised sum, and said he would pay us the rest when he should have had reasonable proof that the will had been destroyed. As for the spectre, he still believed that we had over-drunk, and

had been frightened by a creation of our fancy. We took the money he offered, and went back to New York ; and I did not expect to get any more. But in two weeks Lyon Hargrave came down and paid us up. He said the will had not been found. It was a mystery to me, for I had lied to Lyon Hargrave. I dropped that will directly in front of the cabinet, and not near the fire. You may smile at me, sir, and think me wild ; but I cannot help thinking that the spectre picked up the will. That is my story, sir."

Horace Moore, when the other had ceased speaking, started to his feet, and stood for a time gazing upon his mate like one in a dream. Finally, in a whisper, he said :

"Matt, tell me more of that spectre. What was it like?"

"Like just what I have said, sir. I can't tell you any more. If ever there was a ghost, that was one."

"Did you see her face?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can you not forget all but the face, and tell me how that looked?"

"I suppose, sir, that ghosts can have fair faces and good looks if they had them while in the flesh?"

"Certainly, I should say so."

"Because, sir, the face of the spectre was like some of the grand marble faces we have seen in palaces. It was certainly a handsome face, but, oh, how pale and ghostly!"

Horace took a turn across the cabin, and came back.

"Captain Moore, can you say now that you won't lay this up against me?"

"Bless you, Matt, you don't know how much I owe you ! Not yet is my confidence in you shaken."

"And you don't blame me that I have kept this thing a secret from you until now?"

"No, Matt; but, on the contrary, I thank you for it. Had I known it before I should only have had so much the more time for anxiety. As it is, I shall find my soul in arms until I can solve the mystery."

"Do you think, sir—"

"Do I think what?"

"That you can ever solve the mystery of that spectre?"

"The mystery of the spectre, Matt, I think I can solve already; but it is the SPECTRE'S SECRET that must give me unrest. Oh! for fair winds henceforth! Hush! I will tell you by and by, Matt. My heart and brain are in a tumult now."



CHAPTER XVI.

A STORM IS BREWING FOR SOMEBODY.

Horace Moore did not pray in vain for favorable winds. He carried sail boldly, being careful to hold his men so in hand that he could reduce the canvass at a moment's warning. He experienced a little disagreeable weather on the American coast, but he was not driven from his course, nor was he forced to lie-to. On Monday, the 13th of December, he arrived in New York, and at the close of that day he reported to the senior owner, Mr. Dwinal. His trip had been a most successful one in every respect, and he had arrived at a time when the goods he had in cargo were most needed for the market.

Later in the evening, after they had taken tea together, George Dwinal, the supercargo, and son of the owner, being present, Horace told the merchant the story of his adventures from beginning to end. He told of the mutiny, and of the fate of the mutineers; and he told the story of Sugg Witkill and Matt Bungo; and he told how Lyon Hargrave had been implicated. And then he told of the revelation of Bungo concerning the will.

He was a long time in telling the whole, for the old man's interruptions of ejaculations and questions were many and frequent. In the end our hero said :

"From this you will see, Mr. Dwinal, how necessary it is that I should hasten away upon my search. I cannot rest here. Mr. Lander and Bungo know all about the lading, and can attend to breaking out as well as I can."

"All right," returned Dwinal. "Be off as soon as you please."

"And should I want your assistance, sir, I may call upon you?"

"Call upon me for anything, Captain Moore, and, if my power is equal to the emergency, you shall not call in vain."

"Thank you, sir. And now, of Lyon Hargrave, can you tell me of him?"

"Not much. I only know that he is at Ingleside."

"And of Lily Merton? I have received but one letter from her since I went away, and that was in answer to my first. I have written to her many times."

"I think," said the merchant, in a quiet, business-like way, "that you had better slip up to Oxington and investigate. It is not impossible that Lyon Hargrave has managed to manipulate the mails."

"I have thought of that, sir. But, do you know—have you heard—anything of Lily Merton?"

"Only that she is Lily Merton still. You must find out the rest for yourself. I shall not give you rumors."

Horace's face brightened. Ingleside and Walter Hargrave's will were but as nothing to him compared with Lily.

"By the way," said the merchant, breaking in upon a brief silence, "were you aware that a notice of your death was published in our city papers not many months ago?"

"My death?"

"Aye, a notice of your death."

Horace looked aghast.

"I saw it and knew it was a mistake, for on the very day of the appearance of that notice, I received dispatches from India, by the quickest possible overland and steam route, and you were alive and well, and on the eve of your promotion. I had the thing contradicted; but corrections are not so eagerly caught up as are tales of wrong and accident. I think now that Lyon Hargrave was the author of that bit of news; and Lily Merton may have seen that, and not have seen the correction."

Horace leaped from his seat. He must fly to Lily at once. He knew not what terrors might be overhanging.

"You spoke of going first in another direction," said Dwinal.

"Yes, to Rollington; but I must see Lily now."

"Suppose, my dear boy, that you let *me* go to Oxington. You had better have your plan of battle arranged before you appear there. I will go up to-morrow, and I can contrive to see Miss Merton without exciting suspicion."

Horace grasped the old man's hand, and thanked him heartily. It should be so.

And so, on the following morning, Mr. Dwinal, having left his business for the time with his partners, started for Oxington, where he arrived in season to take a late dinner at the public inn. He then found Mr. Merton's house, and rang at the door.

Was Mr. Merton in?

No. He was at his office.

Just what the visitor had assured himself of beforehand. Then he asked if he could see Miss Merton, whereupon he was ushered into the parlor, and ere long

afterwards the young lady presented herself. Mr. Dwinal arose, and looked into her face.

Trembling from head to foot, and with her beautiful face turning pale, Lily put out her hand.

"You are Mr. Dwinal!" she whispered.

"How do you know?" cried the old man, in amazement.

"Horace Moore wrote to me from New York about you, how kind and good you were, and he described you so heartfully. Am I mistaken?"

"Bless the boy! and bless you! no, I am Mr. Dwinal."

"And Horace?" She caught him by both his arms, and looked up into his face with breathless eagerness.

"Dear child," replied the merchant, drawing her to his side, "you shall not remain in suspense. Horace is well and strong—stronger than he ever was—and is in New York. He came home captain of one of my best ships, and I have come to tell you."

"O! Thank God!"

"Horace would have come himself, but I advised him not. He possesses, he thinks, a clue to Walter Hargrave's missing will, and to find that he must have the assistance of Edith Somerby. I thought he had better not be seen here until he was ready to make a decided move. Did I do wrong?"

"Oh, no, sir, you did right. Dear, dear Horace! Oh, thank God for all his mercies!"

Mr. Dwinal could not stop long, but he stopped long enough to make up his mind that Lily Merton was the most lovely girl he had ever seen; and long enough, too, to make Lily radiant and happy. He told her nothing of Horace's adventures, nor of his dangers, leaving those for the lover to tell himself; but he asked about the

post-office, and this brought out from Lily the story of Edith's visit, and of her discovery in that direction.

"According to this," said Mr. Dwinal, "the sooner Horace sees Miss Somerby the better."

"Yes, sir."

When her visitor had gone Lily fled away to her own chamber to hide her great joy. She did not dare to trust her face to even Mary's gaze until she had somewhat quelled the flutterings of her overflowing heart.

On the morning of the following day Mr. Dwinal was back in his office, where he found Horace anxiously awaiting his coming.

"I've seen an angel, my boy," cried the old man, "and she is as true as fine gold. She will wait for you, never fear."

The young captain's face shone with celestial radiance, and the questions he asked were many; and his happiness did not diminish at any of the merchant's answers. At length he pulled out his watch.

"I wonder if I can get the stage-coach for to-day," he said, anxiously.

"Pshaw!" returned Mr. Dwinal. "Let the stage-coach go. Wouldn't you like Matt Bungo for company?"

"If you can spare him, yes."

"Of course I can spare him. If your first mate and supercargo cannot attend to breaking out, we'll discharge them. Do you take a span of my horses, and my light carriage, and be off."

Horace was trying to find words to express his gratitude, but the merchant stopped him, and bade him go and find Matt, while he sent to have the team made ready.

In two hours from that time Captain Moore and his mate had crossed the ferry into Jersey, and were rolling

comfortably and happily along behind two of the best horses which the New York of that time afforded. The man who now rode so proudly beside Horace Moore was not the Matt Bungo of one year ago. Far, far from it. His skin, though tanned, was healthful in color; his eye was clear, bright and steady; and his garb was that of a gentleman, though smacking of the sea. How often, from the very heart of his heart, he had said to himself: "What a glorious thing it is to feel good!"

Just after noon on the following day, Thursday, they drove up to the farm-house, and Matt jumped out to make sure they had not mistaken the place. He knocked at the door, and the summons was answered by a tidily-dressed and very pretty young woman—a woman who looked both pretty and good.

"How? No! It isn't possible!" exclaimed the sailor, shading his eyes with his hand, a habit he had contracted at sea.

The woman was no less surprised than was he.

"Matt!" she cried.

"Molly! Is it you?"

"Yes, Matt, if you are Matt."

The sailor caught her hand and gazed eagerly into her face.

"Molly! is it true, what I see? Are you—"

"What your dear letter made me, Matt."

"Oh, bless God for that!" And Matt, forgetting time and place, drew her to him, and kissed her upon the cheek.

"Bless me!" he ejaculated, regaining his senses, "I am forgetting. Is Edith Somerby here?"

Before Molly could answer, Edith, who had been looking from the window, rushed past her and out to

the carriage. She had recognized the occupant, and called his name as she came up.

Horace leaped to the ground and embraced his true friend.

"Dear Edith, I live again. Oh, this is joy!"

"A heavenly joy it is for me, dear brother. Let me look at you. Ah, Horace, there is another whose heaven will come down to earth now."

"I know, Edith. I have not yet seen her, but she has heard from me. She knows I am home, safe and well."

"I am glad."

Edith called her younger brother to take care of the horses, and then she led Horace into the house, where mutual introductions took place; and be sure there was surprise and interest for all. Matt Bungo was glad to know the Edith of whom he had heard his captain speak so much; and Edith was very, very glad to know the true, devoted man who had saved Horace Moore, and who had written that letter to Molly Dowd. And Horace Moore, when he held the hand of the girl through whose direct agency nearly all the good had been wrought, thanked her with heartfelt speech and brimming eyes. And Molly herself, when she knew that she held the hand of Matt's true friend, and when she heard his words of blessing, actually cried. And Matt Bungo, standing back against the wall, was busy wiping his eyes with his gaudy Indian bandanna.

After a time Horace said he would go out and look to the horses, and he made a sign for Matt to follow him.

"Matt," he said, when they were alone, "I have only one word of caution for you: We may tell everything here save the story of that night when you and Sugg went for the will. Of that not a breath to anybody."

"Shan't you tell Miss Edith?"

"Not at present. I have my reasons for keeping it a profound secret."

Suddenly Matt Bungo started, and caught his captain by the arm. His eyes were staring, and his breath was suspended.

"What is it, Matt?"

"Horace Moore," the mate whispered, "I knew the face of Edith Somerby was like something I had seen before!"

"Matt!"

"Hers is the face of the spectre we saw at Ingleside!"

"I have been sure of it from the first, Matt. Edith was a sleep-walker—a somnambulist of most decided proclivities, as I well knew. And now, hold your tongue until we have unlocked the secret."

"All right, captain. Not a lisp until you give the signal."

The four friends, thus strangely drawn together, had no secrets, save the one last mentioned, one from another. They sat down in the evening, and a season of story-telling followed which might have yielded interest to an anchorite. First Horace, for himself and Matt, told the story of their voyage, the discovery of Witkill, the mutiny, and the conquest.

And then it came Molly Dowd's turn. Of her instrumentality in setting Matt upon the track of Sugg Witkill, all knew, so she commenced with the visit of Lyon Hargrave, and that gentleman's plan for the removal of Edith Somerby.

"Edith knows all," she said, after she had told of Hargrave's errand. "I was dazed and in the clouds until Matt's letter came—dear old letter! it seems as though Heaven sent it. Matt opened my eyes for the first time in my life to the idea of being good, and for the sake of doing good. And now that I have gained

the smell of the sweet, pure air, I would rather lay me down here in the quiet country and die than go back to the old dark life."

Somehow Matt's arm had stolen around the speaker, and the closing sentence was spoken while her head rested upon his bosom.

We need not tell what were Horace's feelings, nor what he said, during the recital of Molly. In the end, after a long pause, he turned to Edith and said :

"Dear sister, we must close the career of that bad man. I know you will help me."

"I will help you, Horace, to the full extent of my ability."

"You must go to Oxington at once, you and Molly. You can reach there in the evening, and find safety from observation, with some friend—"

"With my aunt," said Edith. "She will help me."

"And in the meantime," pursued Horace, thoughtfully, "I must contrive some way to get Lyon Hargrave to New York. He must be away from Ingleside when I arrive there."

After a brief consultation upon this point, Molly spoke :

"I think I can arrange that," she said. "Let Edith and me go by the way of New York city. I will there send to him a letter which will be sure to bring him down, and on the day that he comes down we can go up."

"Aye," added Matt, "and if it should be necessary to keep Mr. Lyon Hargrave in New York beyond a day and a night, I can fix it. I will set some of our own men to lie in his wake at the 'Foul Anchor,' and they will hold him as long as we want."

At a late hour Edith suggested that they should retire and sleep upon the matter, and consult further,

with clear heads, in the morning, which suggestion was followed.

On the next morning Horace had arranged his plans. After breakfast he and Matt took their carriage for New York, leaving Edith and Molly to follow in the stage-coach.

And on Saturday evening they met at the office of the owners of the *Speedwell*, and were invited by Mr. Dwinal to go up and spend the Sabbath with him. To this Matt and Molly naturally objected, but the merchant would take no denial.

"Such a circle of true friends don't often come together," he said, "and I won't have you separated. If you would please me, come."

Molly looked inquiringly into Matt's face.

"I'll go, Molly, if you will."

And they went, and it was another lift for Molly Dowd into the better and happier life.

With Edith, Horace did not confer while in the city. He had kept from her a most important revelation, and as his immediate movements had to do therewith he could not admit her to confidential consultation. So he consulted with Mr. Dwinal, who was entirely competent to advise him.

"You must take up my old lawyer with you," the merchant said. "He will not only conduct business for you, but you will find him equal to any emergency. I will introduce him to you on Monday morning."

And on this Saturday evening Matt Bungo, at Molly's dictation, wrote a letter as follows :

"N. Y., Sat., Dec. 18, 1841.

"LYON HARGRAVE :—See me on Monday evening, at the 'Foul Anchor.' If I dared to tell you what is up you would not fail.

MOLLY."

And this letter was directed and deposited in the post.

On Monday morning Mr. Dwinal introduced his lawyer as Hobart Van Wort, and from the knowledge which this gentleman seemed to possess of the matter in hand, it was evident that the merchant had consulted him on the subject.

Van Wort was an elderly man, and accounted one of the best lawyers in the city. He was a keen-eyed, heavy-browed man, with features angular but prepossessing. Horace liked him, and it was quickly arranged that he should go with them as Dwinal had suggested.

On that Monday afternoon our party arrived at Oxington, and very soon after landing, Mr. Van Wort learned that Lyon Hargrave had left, only two hours before, for New York.



CHAPTER XVII.

THE SPECTRE'S SECRET.

It was hard for Horace Moore to keep away from Lily Merton, but he resolved to go straight about the business in hand. So persistently and so powerfully had his faith set in a given direction with regard to Walter Hargrave's will that he could not turn from it. He knew that Lily was happy in the knowledge of his safety and nearness, and he was happy in a knowledge of her love and faith, and of a meeting not long to be delayed, let other matters come out as they would.

Our party, upon learning of the absence of Lyon Hargrave, took a close coach, and were driven directly to Ingleside. An old servant answered their summons, who was at first confounded, and then filled with joy upon beholding Horace Moore alive and well. And he was glad to see Edith, also; and he welcomed the others as Edith introduced them.

And others of the servants, when they heard that Horace Moore had come, and Edith Somerby with him, made their way into the hall to feast their eyes upon the glad sight.

It so happened, for a wonder, that Dick Bunker had accompanied his master to New York, so that, saving a new hand in the stables, only the old servants were in charge; and by and by all the servants of the house-

hold were assembled in the large drawing-room, where Mr. Van Wort addressed them. They had learned that he was a great lawyer of New York city, and they stood in awe of him.

"My friends," he said, "we shall stop in this house to-night, as we have business of the utmost importance to transact here. You will go quietly about your business, and leave us to ourselves. I will assume all responsibility; and I give you my word that you shall be shielded from any possible harm."

Of course there was great wonder in the servants' hall, but they could make nothing of it; only the old cook shook her head, and said she believed the right would be done after all.

Later Mr. Van Wort went out, and when he returned he announced that he had invited two visitors, who would be up in the course of the evening.

In answer to a call of the cook, Edith went down and gave directions for supper; and when the table had been prepared in the eating-room, and the tea drawn, the party sat down, Horace taking a seat by Edith's side.

It was a great occasion for Molly Dowd, but she acquitted herself in a manner that called a flush of pride to Matt Bungo's face.

"You will have a piece of this pie, Edith," said Horace, offering to help her.

Edith shook her head.

"You know my old trouble," she said. "Only by being careful of my stomach at night do I hold myself in safety."

"But you will have Molly for a guardian to-night. This is a rare occurrence, Edith. Celebrate it with me."

And Edith not only suffered herself to be induced to

eat the pie, but she eat some pudding with whipped cream, and drank a glass of wine.

Shortly after tea, while Edith and Molly were in their chamber, the visitors whom Mr. Van Wort had invited arrived, and they proved to be Mr. Gerald Tobin, the sheriff, and Asher Merton, Esquire.

Mr. Merton's consternation and surprise upon beholding Horace Moore can be readily imagined; but our hero did not suffer him to remain long in suspense. Advancing with outstretched hand, and with a pleasant smile, the young captain said :

"Mr. Merton, I think there has been a mistake made, and if so, I know you will help me to rectify it."

"Certainly, certainly," cried the attorney, not at all conscious of what it all meant, but he was to be conscious in time.

By and by they were seated in the library, and Horace, having looked to the doors, opened the business.

"Gentlemen," he said, "my trusty officer and my true friend, Matt Bungo, has a story which I wish him to relate to you; but before he speaks, I ask of each and all that you will pledge your solemn word that no speech of his on this night shall ever be used by you to his disadvantage or ill."

The pledge was readily given, and thereupon Matt told to the assembled company the story of the attempt to steal Walter Hargrave's will from that very room, just as he had told it to Horace—told of the false keys, of the coming of the spectre, and all.

The stout old sheriff was deeply interested, but he was by no means astounded. He had known more of Lyon Hargrave than he had ever dared or cared to tell.

But Asher Merton was astounded and confounded. He felt sick at heart, and the very floor seemed to be

slipping away from beneath him. He was very, very uncomfortable.

"Gentlemen," said Horace, when Matt had told his story, and a few questions by the sheriff and Mr. Van Wort had been asked and answered, "what seemed at the time so marvelous to Matt is no marvel to me. Edith Somerby has been, from her youth, a somnambulist, though of late years, the sleep-walking habit has been, in a measure, put off by a careful attention to her diet. It must have been Edith walking in her sleep, and powerfully impressed by certain events which transpired shortly before she retired on that night, who entered this room and frightened the intruders ; and if she took the will from the floor, where it had been dropped, she probably hid it away. You are all aware, of course, of the fact that the somnambulist has no shadow of recollection, in the waking state, of what has been done while sleep-walking."

This matter was discussed until all understood it, and then Horace proceeded :

"I have planned for to-night to discover the spectre's secret, if possible. I have studied sufficiently into the philosophy of somnambulism to know that though the sleep-walker knows nothing when in the waking state of what may have transpired in the other state ; yet, what is done while sleep-walking, may be taken up at any future period while under the same influence. Threads broken in waking will be instantly gathered up and reunited when the somnambulist spell is on. Now, I propose, if possible, to set Edith upon the sleep-walk to-night. She has, at my persistent request, partaken of food which I know must break her rest, and if I can now turn her waking mind in the right direction, and if she really did pick up that will, we may hope

that she will lead us to it. Will you carefully second my efforts?"

All agreed to this.

Then Horace finding the upper doors of the old cabinet unlocked, opened them, and took out a few old papers, which he proceeded to fold neatly in a white envelope, securing the same by two large seals of red wax. After this he explained to his companions his plan, and when they understood, he sent for Edith.

Edith Somerby entered the library with evident anxiety, but was not disconcerted. She recognized Mr. Tobin, whom she had often entertained at Ingleside under her old master, and she greeted him warmly. She also recognized Asher Merton, and quickly detecting pain and consternation in his face, she forgave him in her heart, and gave him her hand as of old.

And then, with a smile, Horace led her to a seat near the table.

"Edith," he said, as he took a seat by her side, "it is late, and we will not detain you long." He spoke easily, and in a natural way, though seriously and earnestly.

"Mr. Tobin and Mr. Merton have made a discovery to-night. They have learned something the importance of which cannot be yet estimated. We have found papers, Edith—papers once belonging to Walter Hargrave—which must be secured, and hidden beyond the reach of Lyon. I cannot explain to you now the nature of those papers, nor the thing which has come of Mr. Tobin's knowledge, but I may do it to-morrow. For the present we wish the papers put in a safe place, where mortal eye shall not see them until other matters are settled; and, may be, for the interest of all concerned, that will have them finally destroyed. I have no right to hold these papers, Edith, nor would it be advisable. And so it is with Mr. Tobin. Should he or I be asked concern-

ing them, we must be able to answer that we do not know. In this strait, my sister, we have ventured to call upon you. You know every corner and cranny of the great house, and can conceal them from the possibility of observation." And thus speaking, Horace held toward her the packet which he had sealed up.

Edith drew back in surprise.

"Why not destroy them now?" she asked.

"Mr. Van Wort says it will not answer."

"My dear lady," interposed the old lawyer, "Captain Moore has told you correctly. It will be greatly to the advantage of those whom you love if you will take those papers and conceal them. As you may suspect, this is but a quibble of law, but a successful quibble is a point gained. The chief points are two: Neither Captain Moore nor his legal adviser must know the whereabouts of those papers; and yet they must be concealed. No one will think of questioning you."

"But if they should question me?"

"If you are driven into a corner," said Van Wort, with a smile, "you may admit that you have received a sealed packet from me, which you will surrender upon my requisition."

Said Horace:

"You can put them under your pillow, or in your traveling bag for to-night, Edith, and in the morning you can consider; only don't let me know what you do with them."

Edith took the packet mechanically, and after gazing upon it awhile, she said:

"I will keep it to-night. I can promise no more now."

"That will do, Edith. Your wits will be fresh in the morning."

Edith Somerby put the sealed packet into her bosom, and shortly afterwards withdrew.

While this consultation had been going on in the library, Matt Bungo had been with Molly Dowd, instructing her in the part she was to play.

It was very near midnight when Matt came to the library and informed Horace that he had received a signal from Molly that Edith had retired.

Shortly afterward the gentlemen, Horace, Mr. Van Wort, Mr. Merton, Mr. Tobin and Matt, removed their boots, and posted themselves in a dark corner of the upper hall whence they could look upon the door of Edith's chamber—the chamber she had occupied in other times.

A full hour passed, and there were signs and whispers of uneasiness and doubt, and even Horace found his heart throbbing painfully.

Another hour, and the watchers had become tired and more doubtful. Still Horace Moore did not give up.

"Wait," he whispered. "We have taken too much trouble—"

The words were upon his lips when the door of the distant chamber was opened, and Edith appeared, with a white blanket thrown over her night-dress, a lighted candle in one hand, and the sealed packet in the other. Her eyes were open and staring, and she moved with spectral solemnity.

"It's clear to me now," whispered Matt, into his commander's ear. "That is the spectre Sugg and I saw. My soul! do you wonder we were frightened?"

"No, Matt. Sh! Make no sound as you follow."

Edith, with slow and steady tread, went to the foot of the stairs leading up into the garret, and ascended them, her watchers keeping her carefully in sight. At

one end of the garret was a large closet, or clothes-press, lined throughout, walls, floor and ceiling, with a sheathing of red cedar, as a protection of clothing from moths. Into this closet Edith made her way, and having set her candle down, she mounted a large cedar chest, and pulled away a loose end of one of the upper sheathing boards, and into the aperture thus afforded she dropped the packet. As she let go the sheathing it returned to its place, looking not differently in the least from its mates. As she got down from the chest the watchers retired into another dark corner, and when she had passed them, and re-entered her chamber, they adjourned to the library, where Mr. Van Wort suggested wine.

There was plenty of liquor upon the sideboard, and those who wished partook.

By and by Matt reported another signal from Molly. Edith was once more in bed, and sleeping soundly.

Upon this Horace, unable to appear wholly calm, took a lamp and went below. He knew the premises, and moved surely. Out in the work-room he found a hammer and a small iron crow, and with these he returned, and then led the way to the garret, and to the cedar-closet. He mounted the chest, and his first movement showed that his nerves were shaken.

"Let me take the crow," said Mr. Tobin. "It is more proper that I should do this work. If necessary, I will get my warrant afterwards."

The sheriff mounted the chest, and went at the work in earnest. Strip after strip of the sheathing was torn away until they came to the floor, and there they found the packet which had been that night sealed up, and beneath it lay a large folded document, and a package of old letters.

The papers were handed to Mr. Van Wort, and the party then returned to the library.

The old lawyer, with cool pertinacity, first overhauled the letters. They were ten in number, and all directed to Edith Somerby, at Rollington. They were worn, and had either been wet by rain or tears. They were not opened, but tied up again with the faded bit of black ribbon, as they had been found.

And, then, Mr. Van Wort opened the pretentious-looking document, upon the margin of which was a glaring red seal.

"Mr. Merton," he said, passing the paper over to his brother attorney, "do you recognize that instrument?"

Asher Merton took the paper, and looked at it, and his frame shook as though with palsy.

"God forgive me!" he at length ejaculated. "I have been blind, and I have been must cruelly duped by a villain; but I have not meant to do wrong—indeed I have not! This is the Last Will and Testament of Walter Hargrave, written by me from his own lips, and signed, sealed and witnessed in my presence!"

"Will you read it, Mr. Merton?"

Asher Merton read the will distinctly, though his voice trembled all the while.

And by that will Horace Moore was certified as Walter Hargrave's adopted son, well beloved and fondly cherished; and he was made sole heir of Ingle-side, and of all property of which the testator might die possessed. Touching legacies to old friends and servants, Horace Moore was, by the will, instructed how to pay them, the work being left entirely in his hands. And in a paragraph by itself, the testator stated why he could not conscientiously entrust more money to his recreant nephew, Lyon Hargrave.

"I think," said Van Wort, after the will had been

read, "that as Captain Moore's legal adviser, I will take charge of the document."

"I should prefer that you would," replied Merton.

"You will render us your assistance?"

"Of course, sir."

"And you, Mr. Tobin?"

"With the greatest pleasure in the world, sir."

At this point Asher Merton started to his feet, and caught the young captain by the hand.

"Horace," he cried, with eager, painful pleading in look and tone, "can you ever forgive me?"

"Let us forget all but our old love and confidence, and the revelations of this night," returned Horace, ardently; "and so we shall have nothing to forgive."

"Can you do that?"

"I will do it."

"Heaven bless you!"

"And now," said Mr. Van Wort, "I think we had better seek our rest. Merton and Tobin and myself have work for the morrow."



CHAPTER XVIII.

CONCLUSION.

On the following morning Edith met Horace Moore in a state of dire alarm.

"Horace—O ! the papers have been stolen from me !"

"Stolen ?"

"Yes. I put them under my pillow when I went to bed, and this morning they were gone."

"Well, Edith, if you have lost papers, I have found some. Did you ever see these before ?"

And he handed to her the package of old letters.

She took them with a startled look, and presently caught her breath. Then, with a great sob, she pressed them to her lips. A little time, like one in a dream, and she looked up into Horace's face with a bewildered expression, but soon a ray of light broke in.

"Horace, these are letters from one who is long, long dead, and with whom my poor heart was buried. I lost them three years ago."

"Did you ever imagine how you lost them ?"

"At one time I had a superstition about their loss. I had cried over them so much, that I one night, in my weakness, wished they were burned, or that I had destroyed them when first received, and on the very next morning they were gone, and I have not seen them since till now."

"I can tell you all about the thief, Edith."

"You?"

"Yes. The same thief stole the sealed packet that stole these letters."

"Horace!"

"Come with me, Edith, and I will tell you a story."

And he led her into a small drawing-room, where Matt and Molly were sitting, and there told to her the whole strange story, as we already know it—told of the felonious incursion of Sugg Witkill and Matt, of the appearance of the spectre, of the dropping of the will, of his own subsequent suspicions, and of his final test, and how it had worked.

"Now you know, Edith, why I urged the pie and the pudding and the wine upon you last night, and why we gave you the sealed packet as we did. The will is found, and you, my sister, are most affectionately and richly remembered therein."

It was a long time before Edith could fully realize the astounding truth—astounding to her, hearing it thus, in its full consummation, for the first time. But she realized it at length, and her face was radiant with a great joy. She thanked God that the Right was to conquer.

"And now," said Horace, "we must leave Ingleside for the present. Mr. Van Wort and the sheriff will look to our interests here. A carriage will be at the door shortly to convey you and Molly to Mr. Merton's, who has expressed the wish that you should stop there. Matt and I will walk. We shall find a home at the hotel for a few days."

"But you are coming to Mr. Merton's?"

"Look out, Edith, that I am not there before you."

But the carriage was on time, and Edith and Molly were first at the attorney's.

Horace and Matt engaged rooms at the comfortable inn of Oxington, and while the latter took a convenient position for watching incoming passengers from New York, the former went to the office of Asher Merton, where he found Mr. Van Wort and the sheriff in consultation with him. As the young captain entered, Mr. Merton arose to greet him, and remained standing after he had done so.

Van Wort had simply to remark to his client that all was going on well.

Then Mr. Merton led our hero to the door.

"Horace," he said, with feelings that were real, "you remember what you told me last night, that we would forget all of the past except our old love and confidence. Can you, my boy, from your heart, say the same this morning?"

Horace took the old man's hand, and looked up into his face with a warm, frank smile:

"Mr. Merton, I hope we may find so much of joy in the future that there shall be no room for unpleasant memories, even were such to be found. But shall they be found? When the sun has arisen, and dispelled the mists, what finally becomes of the clouds?"

"Bless you, Horace! Now go to my house. Lily is waiting for you."

Aye, Lily was waiting. She had welcomed Edith and Molly, but she could not entertain them. Her heart, and all her expectation, led every thought elsewhere. Finally there was a ring at the door-bell, and Edith and Molly slipped away.

Ah! no more waiting, no more painful heart-yearning, no more of darkness or doubt, but clasped to the bosom of her own dear lover, Lily Merton wept in her ecstatic joy, and blessed God.

"Lily ! Lily ! Oh, this is happiness ! Darling, there shall be no more clouds that are not brightly gilded."

"Oh, my own dear love !" murmured the maiden, clinging to him fondly, "if the clouds were thick and black I should not see them while you were with me to bless and sustain me. Oh, Horace !"

After they had sat down, Horace remarked :

"It is a year, Lily, since I left you."

"It will be a year on the day after to-morrow, love."

"You remember, then ?"

"Oh ! could I ever forget ?"

Like children who had found a great joy before unknown were these two as they sat hand in hand, and talked of things past, and things to come.

In New York, Lyon Hargrave was frightened. He had found no Molly Dowd at the "Foul Anchor," and he had learned from Jo that the girl had not been seen in any of her old haunts for months.

And he learned another thing. The ship *Speedwell* had arrived in command of Horace Moore. This latter thing he did not learn until Tuesday morning. And then he set himself to investigating. He repaired to his club-room, and sent out trusty emissaries, and late on that Tuesday he received information that Captain Moore, with one of his officers, had gone to Rollington.

It was past noon on Wednesday when Lyon Hargrave next landed at Oxington. He went first to the post-office, but did not find Adolphus in. Mr. Hardy told him the young man went away on Monday evening, and had not been seen since ; and the old gentleman was very uneasy. And so was Lyon Hargrave very uneasy.

Now, the truth was, that on Monday evening Adolphus had gone up to Ingleside, and having there learned from Nelly, of the cook's department, that Horace Moore and Edith Somerby, with three other persons from New York, were in the house, he had deemed it for his best interest to make himself scarce in that locality, which selfish thought he had put into execution off-hand.

From the post-office, Lyon went directly to the office of Asher Merton. He was desperate, and determined to sweep clean as he went.

But he did not arrive at the attorney's office unheralded. Matt Bungo, with his hat pulled over his eyes, and the collar of his overcoat turned up, had been on the watch, and had seen him land, and had immediately hurried away with the intelligence.

So Asher Merton was prepared, and be sure he had help at hand in case of need.

Lyon entered the office, and found the attorney alone in his reception room. Mr. Merton greeted him respectfully, but he could not return the greeting calmly.

"Merton," he said, sitting down to steady himself, "do you know that to-day is the twenty-second of December?"

"Yes, I know."

"And to-morrow is the twenty-third?"

"Yes."

"And to-morrow the year is up. To-morrow your daughter becomes my wife."

"She is to become your wife, Lyon, when the conditions of her pledge are fulfilled."

"What mean you, sir?"

"You and I must both demand it."

"Aye, and I demand it. Do not you?"

"Not yet, Lyon."

"Then, sir, to jail you go! I am not to be trifled with. I have the warrant for your arrest on charge of misappropriation of funds, and on charge of embezzlement; and I shall lodge the same in the hands of the sheriff forthwith, if I am forced. But, sir, I will first see Lily. She will—"

The attorney arose, and put out his hand.

"Lyon Hargrave, I do not think my daughter would wish to see you. You may tell me that I am weak, and tell nothing new to me. You may tell me that I have been wretchedly duped, and you would be telling the truth. I know it all—I know it now from beginning to end. You would see the sheriff? He is here!"

As Merton spoke the door of an inner room was opened, and Mr. Tobin made his appearance, followed by Van Wort and Matt Bungo.

"This is the sheriff," said Merton, coolly; "and this is Mr. Van Wort, of New York; and this is an officer of the ship *Speedwell*."

Lyon Hargrave had started to his feet as the sheriff entered. He knew Mr. Tobin very well. And he had heard often of Hobart Van Wort as one of the most powerful members of the New York Bar. But when he saw the officer of the *Speedwell*, and recognized Matt Bungo, so erect, so stern, and so unflinching, with a new and glorified manhood in his face, he shrank back appalled. In an instant came the terrible fear that the very worst of his villainy had been discovered. He saw, from Matt's look, that he had a sworn and determined adversary there. But he was not long to remain in doubt. The sheriff advanced, and addressed him:

"Lyon Hargrave, I heard, you, a few moments ago, speak of putting a warrant into my hands. I can save you the trouble. I already have a warrant that will

occupy me for the present. I have a warrant, sir, for YOUR arrest, on charge first, of conspiring to steal your uncle's will. The will has been found, sir, and is in the hands of the surrogate. Second,—you are charged with conspiring for the murder of Horace Moore. Third,—you are charged with conspiring to rob the mails of the United States. Fourth,—you are charged with conspiring for the murder of Edith Somerby. Under such a warrant I do not think I ought to hesitate."

Lyon Hargrave listened to the end like one death-stricken; but a flush came to his face as the sheriff ceased speaking, and with a bound he made for the outer door. But Mr. Tobin had observed the flush, and had been on his guard. He was too thoroughly versed in such tactics to be caught napping. Lyon did not escape him; but was quickly dragged back into the office, and a pair of irons snapped upon his wrists.

We will not linger under the dark shadows. Let us get out from them as speedily as possible, for elsewhere the skies are bright. Lyon Hargrave was conveyed to prison, but the stone walls and the iron bars did not long confine him. Had he appeared before the Grand Jury, no one would have appeared against him; but a mortal terror had seized him, and he shrank from the ordeal of what he felt must be a fatal trial. Ingleside was gone—he had staked all, even his life—and lost! Dick Bunker visited him in his prison-house, and told him of the doings outside; and the valet was able to tell very nearly how the will had been brought to light, and how not only Matt Bungo, but Molly Dowd, had come into friendly relations of the warmest kind with Horace Moore and Lily Merton and Edith Somerby.

And then Lyon whispered to Dick, eagerly and insanely, asking him if he would not carry out revenge upon the traitors.

Dick Bunker shook his head.

"No, no, Lyon, I've had enough of that. It's nothing to me. Mercy ! old boy, what inducement can you hold out to me to dip my hands into such work?"

And then Lyon Hargrave knew how weak he was.

Dick Bunker came once again to the prison ; and one morning, after Dick's last visit, Lyon Hargrave was found dead in his bed. The physician and sheriff suspected poison ; but they held their peace, leaving others to suspect what they pleased.

On New Year's day, at Ingleside, was one of the happiest gatherings of the glad season. On that morning Horace and Lily had been quietly married at the residence of Asher Merton, with only their immediate friends present. And among those friends be sure were Mr. Dwinal and son, of New York, Edith Somerby, Mr. Van Wort, and Matt Bungo and Molly Dowd.

And on this evening of the first day of the New Year all the crew of the *Speedwell* had come up from the city, and other friends had come in from far and near ; and great was the joy, and loud and long the jubilant strains which hailed the new and the true HEIR OF INGLESIDE.

And the evening was not to pass without a sensation. Just before supper, Matt drew Horace apart.

"Captain," he said, his face all aglow, "I want you to grant me a favor. I've got all the necessary documents, and the minister is near. Molly and I want to be married."

"Matt !"

"It's true, sir. We've both found the blessing of doing right ; and now Molly's going to help me, and I'm going to help her, in that way, for the rest of our lives."

"Bless you, dear old Matt ! it shall be done. You shall take your own wife down to supper."

And in the great drawing-room, with the hardy men of the *Speedwell's* crew given the posts of honor, Matt and Molly were married. And Captain Moore gave away the bride.

In conclusion we will tell—Matt Bungo went one more voyage to India as chief mate of the *Speedwell*, taking his wife with him. After that he settled down on shore, engaged in a lucrative business established for him by Horace Moore. He and Molly are still living, prosperous and happy, gaining new knowledge, day by day, of how much better it is to do good than to do evil.

The legacy left to Edith Somerby by Walter Hargrave's will, with something added from Horace's munificence, made her independent, and she spent her time thereafter at the old farmhouse, or at Ingleside, as the fancy seized her, being dearly loved, and calmly happy at either place.

And Horace and Lily? Of course Horace went to sea no more. A new and busy and useful and joyous life was begun—useful not only to himself and his loved ones, but useful wherever his influence could reach. And to-day, joy and blessing and peace reign in their home. Husband and wife, with love growing stronger and deeper every day, watch with tender and healthful care their dear children growing up to crown their lives; and though the silver of age has touched their heads, the pencilings are bright and cheerful. Since that wintry day of the long ago, no more shadows have fallen upon Ingleside.

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